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NOVEMBER
2005

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AND CANADA



FOREST KINGS



FOREST KINGS

How Animal Collective Won Their Stripes

BY TRINIE DALTON

R.L. BURNSIDE, R.I.P.

VIDEO GAMES OF THE DARK GODS * SECRETS OF GINSENG



ARTS & CRAFTS ON TOUR [FOR MORE INFO: ARTS-CRAFTS.CA]

BROKEN SOCIAL SCENE ON TOUR WITH FEIST

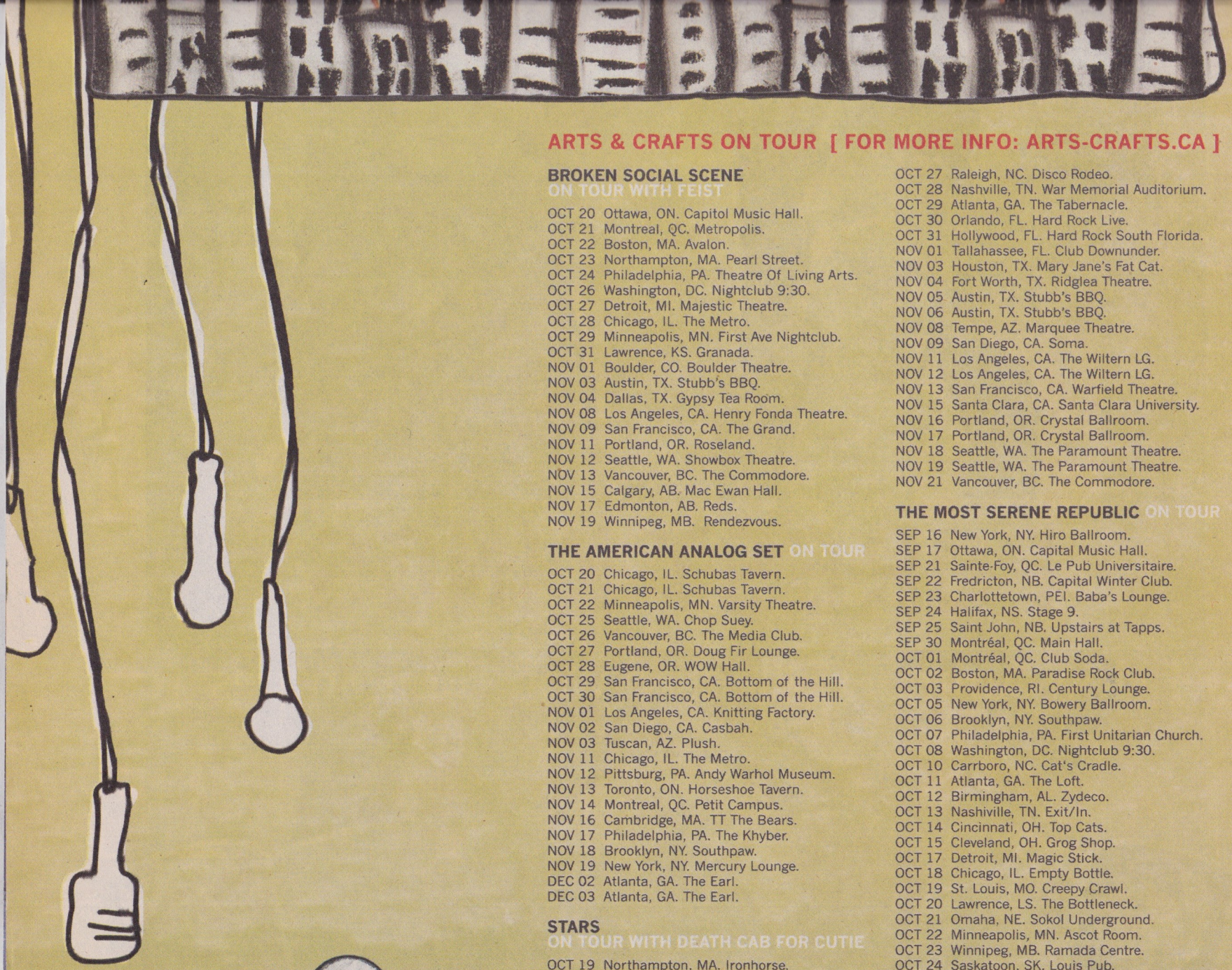
OCT 20 Ottawa, ON. Capitol Music Hall.
OCT 21 Montreal, QC. Metropolis.
OCT 22 Boston, MA. Avalon.
OCT 23 Northampton, MA. Pearl Street.
OCT 24 Philadelphia, PA. Theatre Of Living Arts.
OCT 26 Washington, DC. Nightclub 9:30.
OCT 27 Detroit, MI. Majestic Theatre.
OCT 28 Chicago, IL. The Metro.
OCT 29 Minneapolis, MN. First Ave Nightclub.
OCT 31 Lawrence, KS. Granada.
NOV 01 Boulder, CO. Boulder Theatre.
NOV 03 Austin, TX. Stubb's BBQ.
NOV 04 Dallas, TX. Gypsy Tea Room.
NOV 08 Los Angeles, CA. Henry Fonda Theatre.
NOV 09 San Francisco, CA. The Grand.
NOV 11 Portland, OR. Roseland.
NOV 12 Seattle, WA. Showbox Theatre.
NOV 13 Vancouver, BC. The Commodore.
NOV 15 Calgary, AB. Mac Ewan Hall.
NOV 17 Edmonton, AB. Reds.
NOV 19 Winnipeg, MB. Rendezvous.

THE AMERICAN ANALOG SET ON TOUR

OCT 20 Chicago, IL. Schubas Tavern.
OCT 21 Chicago, IL. Schubas Tavern.
OCT 22 Minneapolis, MN. Varsity Theatre.
OCT 27 Raleigh, NC. Disco Rodeo.
OCT 28 Nashville, TN. War Memorial Auditorium.
OCT 29 Atlanta, GA. The Tabernacle.
OCT 30 Orlando, FL. Hard Rock Live.
OCT 31 Hollywood, FL. Hard Rock South Florida.
NOV 01 Tallahassee, FL. Club Downunder.
NOV 03 Houston, TX. Mary Jane's Fat Cat.
NOV 04 Fort Worth, TX. Ridglea Theatre.
NOV 05 Austin, TX. Stubb's BBQ.
NOV 06 Austin, TX. Stubb's BBQ.
NOV 08 Tempe, AZ. Marquee Theatre.
NOV 09 San Diego, CA. Soma.
NOV 11 Los Angeles, CA. The Wiltern LG.
NOV 12 Los Angeles, CA. The Wiltern LG.
NOV 13 San Francisco, CA. Warfield Theatre.
NOV 15 Santa Clara, CA. Santa Clara University.
NOV 16 Portland, OR. Crystal Ballroom.
NOV 17 Portland, OR. Crystal Ballroom.
NOV 18 Seattle, WA. The Paramount Theatre.
NOV 19 Seattle, WA. The Paramount Theatre.
NOV 21 Vancouver, BC. The Commodore.

THE MOST SERENE REPUBLIC ON TOUR

SEP 16 New York, NY. Hiro Ballroom.
SEP 17 Ottawa, ON. Capital Music Hall.
SEP 21 Sainte-Foy, QC. Le Pub Universitaire.
SEP 22 Fredricton, NB. Capital Winter Club.
SEP 23 Charlottetown, PEI. Baba's Lounge.
SEP 24 Halifax, NS. Stage 9.



arts-crafts.ca // galleryac.com

arts & crafts

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NOV 11 Portland, OR. Roseland.
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NOV 13 Vancouver, BC. The Commodore.
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OCT 22 Minneapolis, MN. Varsity Theatre.
OCT 25 Seattle, WA. Chop Suey.
OCT 26 Vancouver, BC. The Media Club.
OCT 27 Portland, OR. Doug Fir Lounge.
OCT 28 Eugene, OR. WOW Hall.
OCT 29 San Francisco, CA. Bottom of the Hill.
OCT 30 San Francisco, CA. Bottom of the Hill.
NOV 01 Los Angeles, CA. Knitting Factory.
NOV 02 San Diego, CA. Casbah.
NOV 03 Tuscan, AZ. Plush.
NOV 11 Chicago, IL. The Metro.
NOV 12 Pittsburg, PA. Andy Warhol Museum.
NOV 13 Toronto, ON. Horseshoe Tavern.
NOV 14 Montreal, QC. Petit Campus.
NOV 16 Cambridge, MA. TT The Bears.
NOV 17 Philadelphia, PA. The Khyber.
NOV 18 Brooklyn, NY. Southpaw.
NOV 19 New York, NY. Mercury Lounge.
DEC 02 Atlanta, GA. The Earl.
DEC 03 Atlanta, GA. The Earl.

STARS
ON TOUR WITH DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE

OCT 19 Northampton, MA. Ironhorse.
OCT 20 New York, NY. Hammerstein Ballroom.
OCT 21 Carlisle, PA. Dickinson College.
OCT 22 Providence, RI. Lupos at the Strand.
OCT 23 Washington, DC. Nightclub 9:30.
OCT 24 Washington, DC. Nightclub 9:30.
OCT 25 Philadelphia, PA. Electric Factory.
OCT 27 Raleigh, NC. Disco Rodeo.
OCT 28 Nashville, TN. War Memorial Auditorium.
OCT 29 Atlanta, GA. The Tabernacle.
OCT 30 Orlando, FL. Hard Rock Live.
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SEP 24 Halifax, NS. Stage 9.
SEP 25 Saint John, NB. Upstairs at Tapps.
SEP 30 Montréal, QC. Main Hall.
OCT 01 Montréal, QC. Club Soda.
OCT 02 Boston, MA. Paradise Rock Club.
OCT 03 Providence, RI. Century Lounge.
OCT 05 New York, NY. Bowery Ballroom.
OCT 06 Brooklyn, NY. Southpaw.
OCT 07 Philadelphia, PA. First Unitarian Church.
OCT 08 Washington, DC. Nightclub 9:30.
OCT 10 Carrboro, NC. Cat's Cradle.
OCT 11 Atlanta, GA. The Loft.
OCT 12 Birmingham, AL. Zydeco.
OCT 13 Nashiville, TN. Exit/In.
OCT 14 Cincinnati, OH. Top Cats.
OCT 15 Cleveland, OH. Grog Shop.
OCT 17 Detroit, MI. Magic Stick.
OCT 18 Chicago, IL. Empty Bottle.
OCT 19 St. Louis, MO. Creepy Crawl.
OCT 20 Lawrence, LS. The Bottleneck.
OCT 21 Omaha, NE. Sokol Underground.
OCT 22 Minneapolis, MN. Ascot Room.
OCT 23 Winnipeg, MB. Ramada Centre.
OCT 24 Saskatoon, SK. Louis Pub.
OCT 25 Regina, SK. Riddell Centre.
OCT 26 Calgary, AB. MacEwan Hall.
OCT 27 Edmonton, AB. The Starlite Ballroom.
OCT 30 Vancouver, BC. The Commodore.
NOV 05 San Francisco, CA. Café Du Nord.



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ISSUE NINETEEN | NOVEMBER 2005 | RESPONSIBLE ADVOCACY

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44 **Decrepit** There are a lot of ghosts and good avocado trees in Echo Park... Short fiction by **Trinie Dalton**, with an illustration by **Ian Holman**.

70 **Trickster** **Eddie Dean** remembers **R.L. Burnside**.

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IT'S A SHAME ABOUT RAY

"Artists and corporations working together, that's the 21st century. That's the true Age of Aquarius."
—Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek in the Oct. 5, 2005 Los Angeles Times, explaining why he wanted to accept $15 million to use "Break On Through (to the Other Side)" for an SUV ad

Jim Morrison as mouthpiece for a new generation of SUVs? That's some "Age of Aquarius" that Manzarek is working there. It sounds more like your average, base greedheadism to me. And to brother Densmore, too; as he said to the Times, "When Ray calls [regarding a new licensing possibility], I always ask him, 'What is it you want to buy?'"

Let's give Ray the benefit of the doubt for a second. Maybe he's simply speaking a sad truth: that in 2005, any obligation of the artist to his muse, to his collaborators and to his culture ends where the machinations of the corporation begin. That doesn't sound to me like the "Age of Aquarius": an era, according to Wikipedia, that is to be marked by "universal brotherhood rooted in reason, where it will be possible to solve social problems in a manner equitable to all... with greater opportunity for intellectual and spiritual improvement." But what we see today is an explicitly anti-Aquarian situation, in which corporations—and the corporate system itself—are behaving pathologically: they increase inequity, they decrease opportunity, innovation, and individual and collective expression by subverting our hard-won democratic and legal systems. It's true that, to the degree that we are interconnected by an economic system, we all bow before the corporate gods. But only a fool would call that a privilege, much less an example of genuine Aquarian brotherhood.

Arthur accepts advertising and marketing money from corporate sources. Until there is a way for us to survive without corporate involvement, we'll keep cashing those checks and using that money for our own—dare we say it? sure, why not—Aquarian ends. Much the same goes for a young band in 2005 having to sell a song to a corporation to be used as a jingle in an ad; it's often a song they can't get played on the radio or TV because of *corporate* programming strategy. It's a bit of sweet revenge on the system; it's easy money when the money's hard; and it lets them *subsist*.

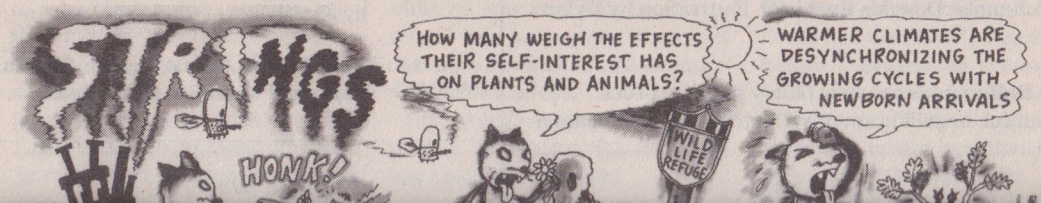


A genuine Aquarian moment: Yoko Ono at Arthurfest 2005.

But Ray Manzarek is hardly penniless; and Jim's not around to give the thumb's up on his voice being used to promote the sale of more smog-spewing, gas-guzzling, climate-changing, Arab dictatorship-sponsoring abominations. More power to John Desnmore for standing up to Manzarek's public bullying and refusing to profane the legacy of a great band by turning them into corporate shills.

I'd like to think Ray was planning on sliding some of his Cadillac SUV millions over to Les Degonfles: anti-SUV activists in Paris who could probably use some new instant tire deflation devices right about now. Somehow I doubt he knows they even exist, busy as he is tiptoeing through the tulips of his private perverse Aquarius. To that I say: Enjoy it while it lasts, Ray. The planet is burning. You'll feel the heat soon enough.

—Jay Babcock, editor



ARTHUR FOR PRISONERS

In lieu of a proper education system America has instituted a special school for people of color called prison. Students learn a lot in prison, but are propagandized solely by corporate media, whose rotten message grows even more virulent in the nightmare that is life inside. As a consequence, *Arthur* regularly receives pleas from these captives to provide them with an untainted diversion at least.

If you are one of our 50,000 readers who enjoys *Arthur* for free, please consider giving a prisoner the same privilege. Please remember that over two million people—one out of every 142 Americans—is now in prison. Almost 500,000 Americans are in jail for drugs-only offenses, and if they try to go to a record store or coffeehouse or nightclub to pick up a copy of *Arthur,* they will be shot and bit by dogs. These starving minds have got to get Arthur sent to them in a warden-approved manner, which costs thirty dollars a year.

With your kind donation of $30, *Arthur* will provide a lucky prisoner and their cellblock with a free one-year subscription. Provide a beacon for a guy who got caught today by giving with PayPal at **arthurmag.com**. Or, if you'd like to send a check or money order, make it payable to Lime Publishing, write "Arthur Prisoner Fund" somewhere on the check and send it to Lime Publishing, 13104 Colton Lane, Gaithersburg, MD 20878. We'll do the rest.



Arthurfest Photo by Jeremiah Gaffa

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Arthurfest Photo by Jeremiah Garcia

WHERE T-MODEL FORD IS

Fathers in Greenville, Mississippi can let their daughters out of the house as the notorious **"Tail Dragger" T-Model Ford** is no longer at large as much as he used to be.

According to the guys over at Fat Possum Records this notorious 85-year-old lothario has been captured four times by Greenville police this week alone, which understandably has left T-Model very little time to talk to us about ghosts, whether women have dirty minds and where my pearlhandled switchblade that I just let him hold during Arthurfest went.

Hopefully we will be able to speak with him again after his re-education. AMERICA UBER ALLES!

—David Reeves

ROOTS CULTURE

DAVID REEVES ON THE WONDERS OF GINSENG

Fall is here, and it's time to think about how you're going to maintain your erection for the long winter months. Buying Viagra pills might do the trick, but face it, you are going to be broke after giving all your money to the gas man, so take my advice and pick up a dub sack of *American* ginseng instead.

Buying ginseng is like buying drugs; you're going to get ripped off unless you know the deal. They won't have it at the hippie health food store because hippies are afraid of the awesome power within. For the *real* you have to go to Chinatown. Go in any place that has a neon ginseng root in the window, or a picture of ginseng on the sign.

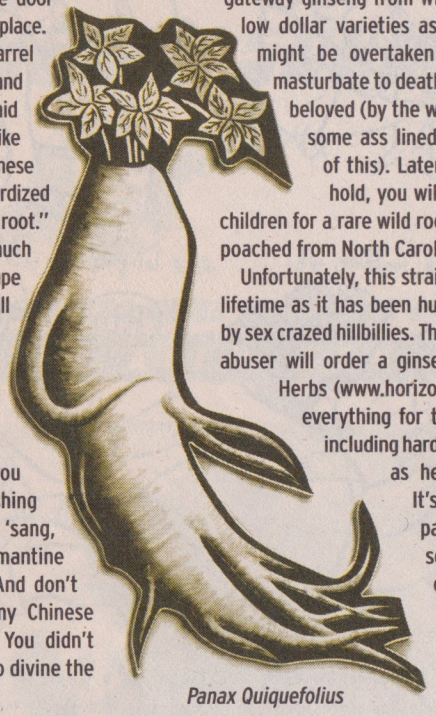
If you aren't overwhelmed by the smell of the ginseng when you go in the door then you are not in the right place. The best places will have barrel after barrel of various roots and then thousand dollar roots laid out in little boxes to look like little people—hence the Chinese name that ginseng was bastardized from: *Jenshen,* or "man root." These roots are prized as much for their size as for their shape and the super fat ones will supposedly do the same thing for your penis, which is the real reason they call it a "man root".

The ginseng clerks are going to come at you like you are a hipster tourist, pushing inferior Chinese or Korean 'sang, but you must remain adamantine for "American Ginseng." And don't let them talk you into any Chinese medicine bullshit, either. You didn't go there to get skinny or to divine the future, you are there for S E X that will disturb the neighbors. Don't ever forget that, no matter what they offer you. Tell them you want the 20 bag of American ginseng, cut into dime size pieces. If they don't have it, leave.

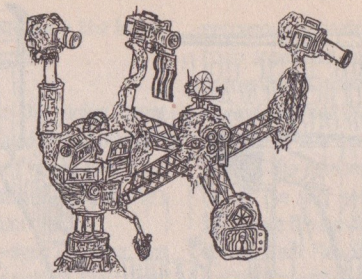
Take a piece of it out of the bag and stick it between your cheek and gum and let it dissolve for an hour or so until you finally chew it up. The flavor is bitter at first, but soon the sweet sweet nectar of immortality runs through your chi, hooking up your digestion and breath. You can feel your immune system double up and, according to the Soviet scientists, your cells grow more resistant to radiation.

The stuff you get will be probably be the typical gateway ginseng from Wisconsin. Start with the low dollar varieties as a novice, or else you might be overtaken by sexual urges and masturbate to death on the way to see your beloved (by the way, make sure you have some ass lined up before you do any of this). Later, when addiction takes hold, you will sell one of your many children for a rare wild root of *panax quiquefolius* poached from North Carolina or Virginia.

Unfortunately, this strain will die out within our lifetime as it has been hunted to near extinction by sex crazed hillbillies. The conscientious ginseng abuser will order a ginseng plant from Horizon Herbs (www.horizonherbs.com), which has everything for the modern spice witch, including hard to find ingredients such as henbane and belladonna. It's every Americans patriotic duty to plant some 'Sang today or else our children's, and our children's children's sex lives will be cold and uneventful affairs.



Panax Quiquefolius



LETTERS

Ah yes, the Ol' Zeigarnik Effect

In his September column in *Arthur*, Douglas Rushkoff asks if it is okay to use the same thought weapons as our foes. My answer is yes! Persuasion should be a compulsory subject in school. You cannot see thought weapons without a modicum of proficiency with such tools. These techniques are not always weapons, but simply tools. Like how a lever makes a heavy object easier to lift, the word "because" makes people more likely to comply regardless of the reason, a mental stunt academicians have repeatedly proven.

If you haven't played with these mental tools you don't know what they look like. I'm not suggesting everybody become a direct response marketer, but I don't imagine most readers can see the commonly told story of Jesus as structurally identical to a direct response technique called The Zeigarnik Effect, leveraging incomplete information to build anticipation, commitment and a willingness to spend. Do you know how lucky you are Jesus did not come today?

If you don't know the mechanics of persuasion, you can't distinguish good ideas from weapons of thought. Since you don't see the mechanism, you will be prey to those of us more savvy with these tools. The meme pool is infested with sharks. I'm hoping you, dear reader, will learn to swim.

Ben Mack *Via email*

Dear Ben, Hmm, interesting. We'd love to see a really together manual of thought weapons and direct response techniques, along with a history of their use and whatnot. Just for self-protection, of course, against Manzarek and his ilk. Anyone know of one? Please clue us in at the address below....

SEND MORE MAIL, PLEASE

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NOTES ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Able Brown draws, prays to the moon, & digs

Eddie Dean is a writer in Rockville, Maryland.

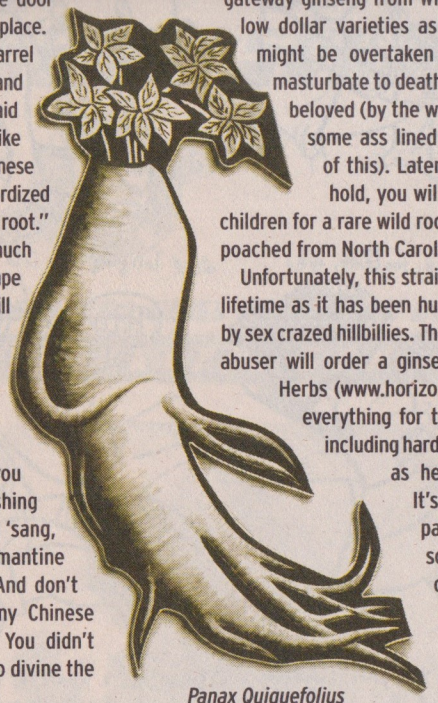
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Douglas Rushkoff just finished a new book,

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Unfortunately, this strain will die out within our lifetime as it has been hunted to near extinction by sex crazed hillbillies. The conscientious ginseng abuser will order a ginseng plant from Horizon Herbs (www.horizonherbs.com), which has everything for the modern spice witch, including hard to find ingredients such as henbane and belladonna. It's every Americans patriotic duty to plant some 'Sang today or else our children's, and our children's children's sex lives will be cold and uneventful affairs.



Panax Quiquefolius

"because" makes people more likely to comply regardless of the reason, a mental stunt academicians have repeatedly proven.

If you haven't played with these mental tools you don't know what they look like. I'm not suggesting everybody become a direct response marketer, but I don't imagine most readers can see the commonly told story of Jesus as structurally identical to a direct response technique called The Zeigarnik Effect, leveraging incomplete information to build anticipation, commitment and a willingness to spend. Do you know how lucky you are Jesus did not come today?

If you don't know the mechanics of persuasion, you can't distinguish good ideas from weapons of thought. Since you don't see the mechanism, you will be prey to those of us more savvy with these tools. The meme pool is infested with sharks. I'm hoping you, dear reader, will learn to swim.

Ben Mack *Via email*

Dear Ben, Hmm, interesting. We'd love to see a really together manual of thought weapons and direct response techniques, along with a history of their use and whatnot. Just for self-protection, of course, against Manzarek and his ilk. Anyone know of one? Please clue us in at the address below....

SEND MORE MAIL, PLEASE

editor@arthurmag.com or
Arthur Letters, 3408 Appleton Street, Los Angeles, CA 90039

NOTES ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Able Brown draws, prays to the moon, & digs getting in Her ocean. ablebrown@gmail.com

Daniel Chamberlin's favorite Egyptian Arabic phrase is "mafeesh mushkila," or "no problem." Though he enjoyed shopping at their many retail outlets throughout Lebanon, he is not now nor has he ever been a member of Hezbollah. www.danielchamberlin.com

Byron Coley is between a rock and a hard place.

Greg Cook has a website at gregcookland.com. Ask him about small New England town politics.

Trinie Dalton has two new releases: *Wide Eyed* (Akashic Books) and *Dear New Girl or Whatever Your Name Is* (McSweeney's). The show "The Zine Unbound: Kults, Werewolves and Sarcastic Hippies" at the Yerba Buena Center, is partially based on her new zine, *Werewolf Express*. The show runs October-December.

Eddie Dean is a writer in Rockville, Maryland. His memoir of the Blue Ridge,"Ice Cream for Crow" published in Arthur #1, is included in the anthology, *Cornbread Nation: 2: The United States of Barbecue* (UNC Press). He wrote liner notes for Dust-to-Digital's forthcoming box set, a chronicle of the last 78 rpm label, Fonotone Records.

Ernest Eugene Gibson III lives in Los Angeles, makes wicker, and is the author of several self-published books. wickermaker@hotmail.com

Ian Holman Left the steepest hill in Echo Park long ago to live and work in the firefly summers of New York.

Susanna Howe is a photographer whose work has appeared all over the place. She is the author of *(Sick): A Cultural History of Snowboarding*. susannahowe.com

Dave Kiersh has a website at davekcomics.com. Ask him about Kin Platt.

Morgan V. Lebus enjoys helping you, help yourself, in return for a cigarette. Runs the label I and Ear Records with a couple friends. Lives in NYC. Hopes to have an "out of body" experience in the remaining four continents he's yet to visit and/or travel in space. Seriously.

Dylan Martorell is a Melbourne based artist/musician, currently organising a performance vaguely based on accounts of Scottish cannabilism. Musta been during the great haggis famine. www.hiddenarchive.com

Thurston Moore is in the process of recording new solo lp *the trees outside the academy*—also new Sonic Youth jamz—and is writing obviously—and getting rid of his email address—oh dear god...

Pshaw works 'round the clock as a suburban robot who monitors reality. Common stock, shoves poles, etc. at www.pshaw.net

David Reeves is waiting for the day that the endemic corruption of society is punished by the terrible hand of GOD.

Douglas Rushkoff just finished a new book, *Get Back in the Box*, which he hopes will arrest the spread of corporate capitalism. He's also writing a comic book for Vertigo called *Testament*, intended to arrest the spread of fundamentalism. Please wish him luck.

Nathaniel Russell is an illustrator, printmaker, and musician from Indiana, currently living and working in Oakland, California. nat@thisishowwedo.com.

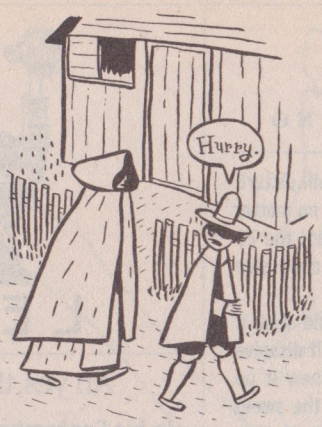
Gabe Soria is a freelance writer and founding member of the Drunken Spacemen's Guild who lives in Brooklyn with his lovely wife and their Led Zeppelin-loving son. He's working on what he thinks is a science-fiction novel, but in the end he guesses it will be what it will be. He wrote *Batman Adventures* #9.

K-Fai Steele has just begun transforming from the pink of youth to the sweaty, leathery, bill-paying hide of adulthood. k-faisteele.blogspot.com

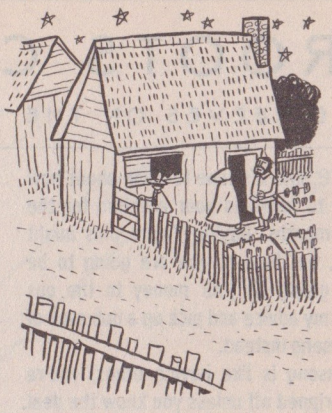
Wonders of the Known World

by Greg Cook







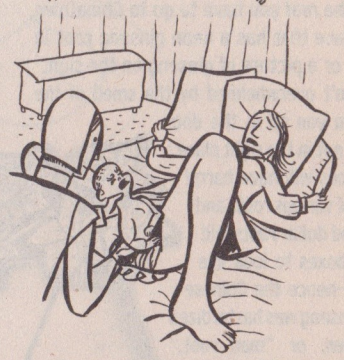


Hannah Coffin was the first child born in the village









and her mother, who died bringing her into this world,







the first to die there.

Her father, Peter, buried his wife, but remained inconsolable and fled that place, abandoning Hannah and her older brother.

Their uncle, a minister, took them into his family and raised









and her mother, who

died bringing her into this world,





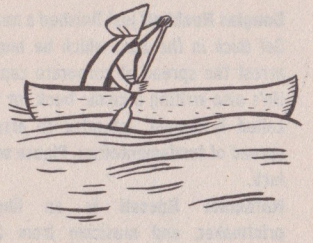


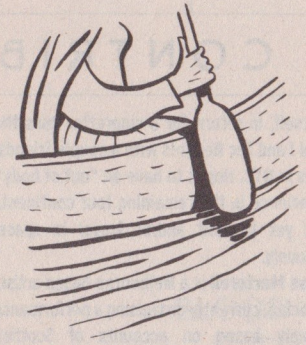
the first to die there.

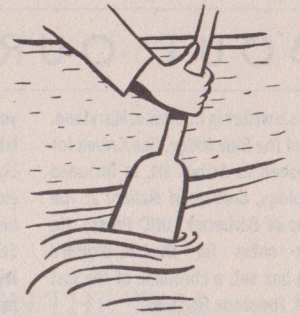
Her father, Peter, buried his wife, but remained inconsolable

and fled that place, abandoning Hannah and her older brother.

Their uncle, a minister, took them into his family and raised









them as his own.

But when Hannah came of age,

she ran off in search of her father.



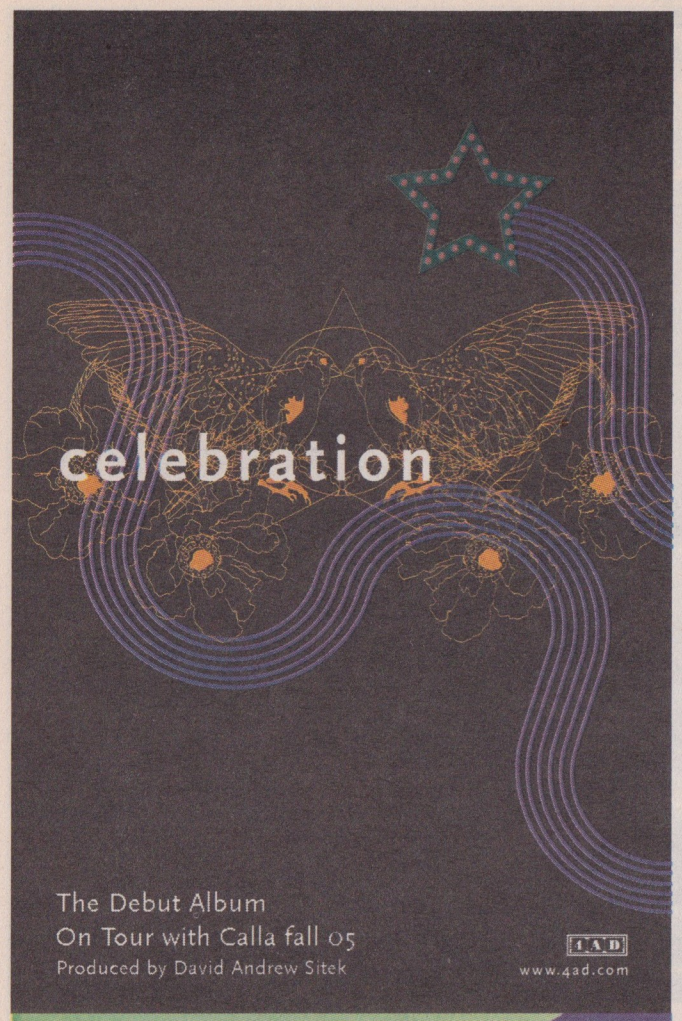




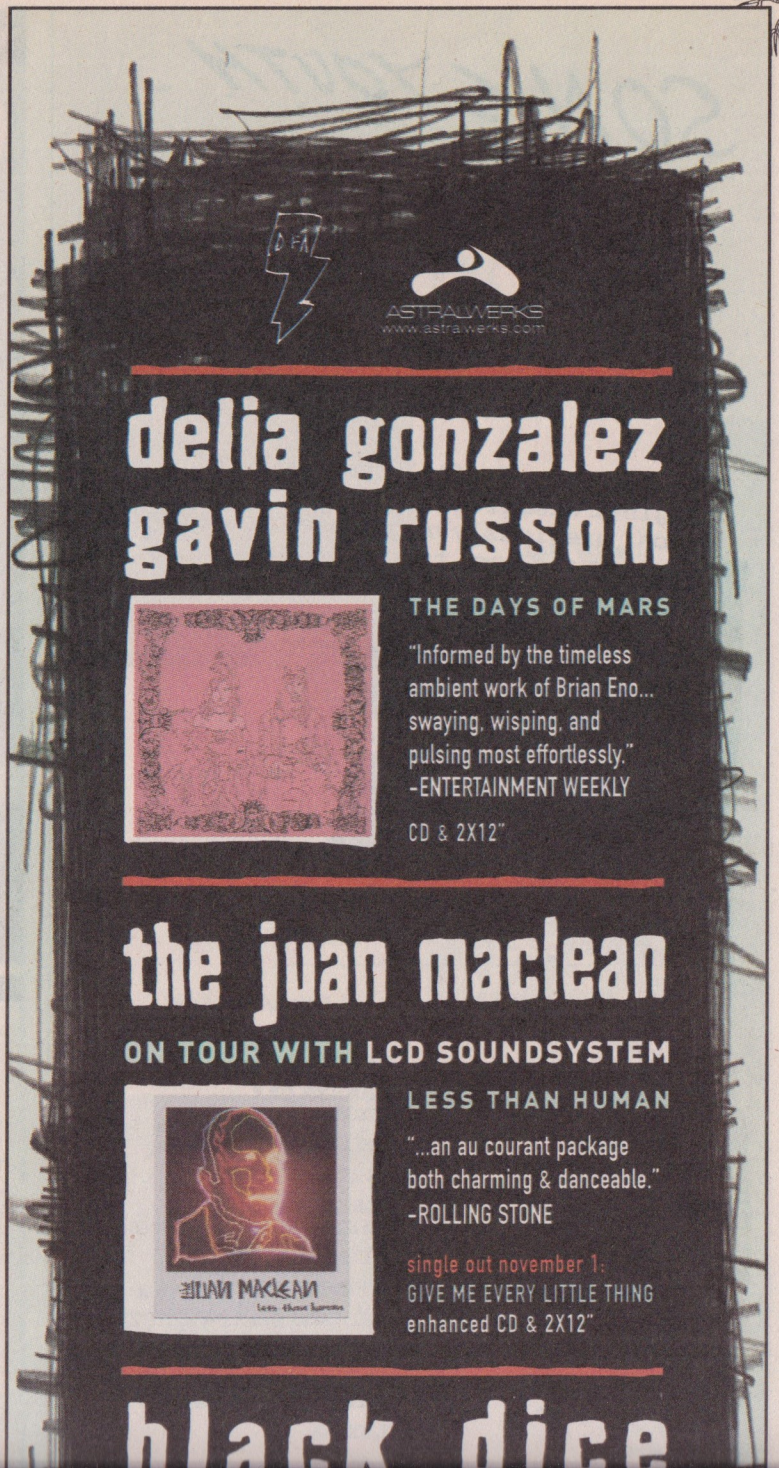


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continued.


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The Debut Album
On Tour with Calla fall 05
Produced by David Andrew Sitek
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the juan maclean
ON TOUR WITH LCD SOUNDSYSTEM
LESS THAN HUMAN
"...an au courant package both charming & danceable."
-ROLLING STONE
single out november 1:
GIVE ME EVERY LITTLE THING
enhanced CD & 2X12"
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The Debut Album
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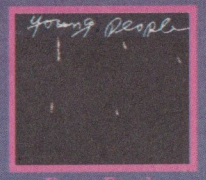
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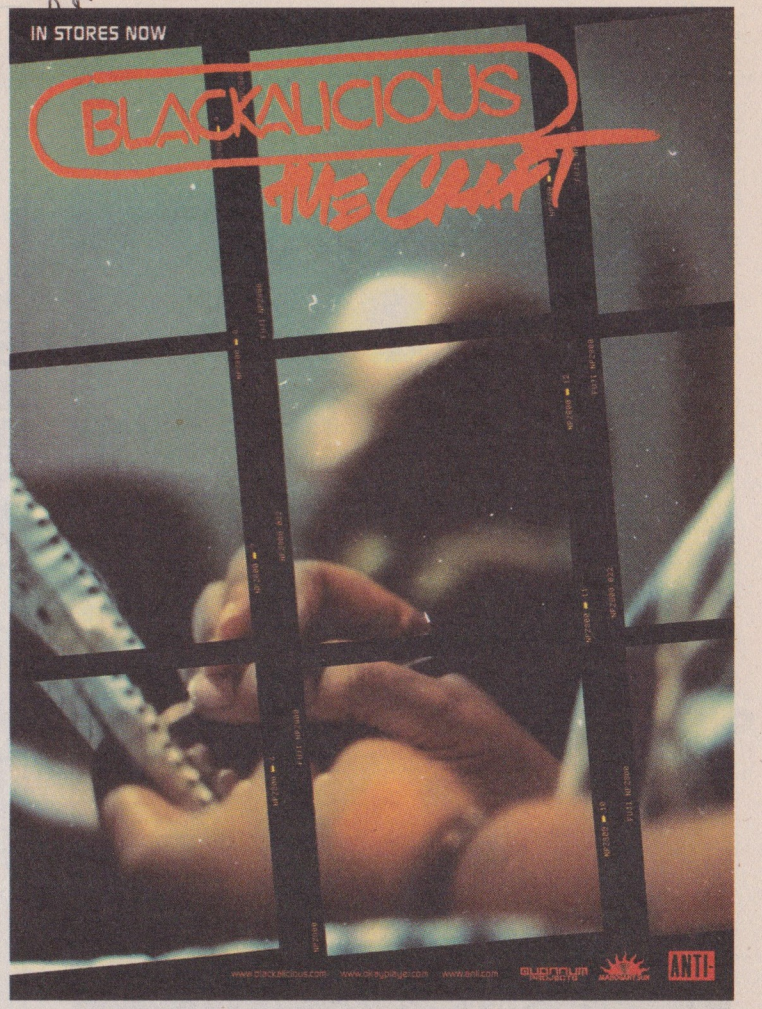
OUT-TAKES, B-SIDES & REHEARSALS

LEE #2*

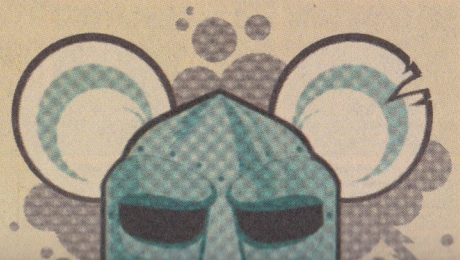
DISC TWO:
8 TRACK DEMOS

TUNIC
NUMBER ONE (DISAPPEARER)
TITANIUM EXPOSE
DIRTY BOOTS
CORKY (CINDERELLA'S BIG SCORE)
MY FRIEND GOO
BOOKSTORE (MOTE)
ANIMALS (MARY-CHRIST)
DV2 (KOOL THING)
BLOWJOB (MILDRED PIERCE)
LEE #2

IN STORES NOW



DANGERDOOM



blowouts and lost



DISC ONE:

THE ORIGINAL ALBUM
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DIRTY BOOTS
TUNIC (SONG FOR KAREN)
MARY-CHRIST
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CINDERELLA'S BIG SCORE
SCOOTER • JINX
TITANIUM EXPOSE

OUT-TAKES, B-SIDES & REHEARSALS

LEE #2*
THAT'S ALL I KNOW (RIGHT NOW)
THE BEDROOM
DR. BENWAY'S HOUSE
TUFF BOYZ*

*PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED

DISC TWO:

8 TRACK DEMOS

TUNIC
NUMBER ONE (DISAPPEARER)
TITANIUM EXPOSE
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CORKY (CINDERELLA'S BIG SCORE)
MY FRIEND GOO
BOOKSTORE (MOTE)
ANIMALS (MARY-CHRIST)
DV2 (KOOL THING)
BLOWJOB (MILDRED PIERCE)
LEE #2

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I KNOW THERE'S AN ANSWER
CAN SONG*
ISAAC*
GOO INTERVIEW FLEXI*

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SUICIDE BOMBS AS VIRAL MEDIA

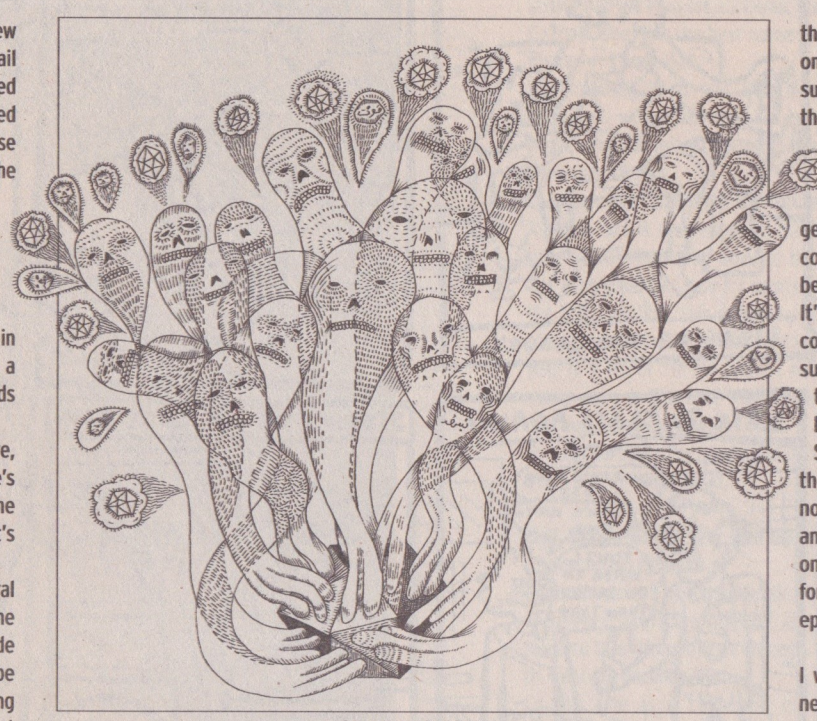
For all of America's supposed new media savvy, misunderstandings prevail here about how the suicide attacks used against us and our allies are coordinated and fuled by our very own media. Yes, these are "networked" events—but not in the sense that they are directly connected through a communications system, with "sleepers" waiting for phone calls and then taking action. It's not a matter of fax trees, email instructions, or direct transmissions between some guys in London, some other ones in Egypt and a central server disseminating commands out of Pakistan.

More than any command structure, terrorist organization or ideology, there's an underlying mechanism propelling the growth and spread of suicide attacks. It's called a media virus.

What we're witnessing is viral contagion—the beginnings of what some hope will spawn an epidemic of suicide attacks. These attacks would not be conducted by "foreigners" crossing borders with plastic explosives kits, but by locals, spontaneously acting in concert with others around the globe. It's a scary thought to those who only understand simple cause-and-effect, but this isn't magic or supernatural at all.

As numerous studies have shown, airplane accidents tend to be clustered—one pilot error leads to a catastrophe that becomes big news. Shortly later, one or more other "human error" airplane crashes occur. On college campuses, student suicides rarely happen in isolation. News of one suicide leads to another. When a famous person or large group commits suicide, many copycat events occur shortly later—beyond the statistical norm.

It's not that one event causes the other; rather, suicidal people are waiting for a cue, or a pilot who is already careless or flying under the influence



DYLAN MARTORELL

WHEN ISSUES REMAIN CLOSETED, A CULTURE BECOMES MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE CONTAGION OF A MEDIA VIRUS.

cell's own code. If the virus succeeds in doing this, it turns the cell into a virus factory—the cell commits suicide in the virus's name.

The late '90s saw many performers, politicians, and even news stories vying for our attention and reaction by challenging confused, or obsolete cultural codes. Madonna, whose music wasn't particularly new or well-executed, nonetheless achieved a high profile because her work nested itself in our growing yet still unarticulated sense that women could enjoy sex or assume

been captured, randomly, by home video. The tape was shown around the world overnight on cable television because it demonstrated the power of the camcorder. The virus then replicated and spread because race relations and police brutality in American cities were social ills that just couldn't be talked about, yet. The Rodney King virus eventually led to urban rioting in dozen American cities, and succeeded in forcing a repressed conversation about faulty societal code into the open.

Suicide bombing is a media virus, albeit with very real effects. The sticky

this means becoming a suicide bomber oneself. For others, it means seeing suicide bombers around every corner—as the accidental death of a Brazilian man in London, thought to be a suicide bomber, confirms.

But the important thing to get here is that the transmission of commands is working on a level not at all below the radar, but completely above it. It's not even that there are some hidden commands in the execution of one suicide bomb that then communicate to those other would-be suicide bombers who can decipher the event. Suicide bombing is the virus, using the perpetrator to activate others. It's not a person-to-person communication, anymore, but a viral transmission. And one that, without a more substantive form of intervention, is bound to reach epidemic proportions before it dies out.

Were I advising the West's governments, I would tell them that the best way to neutralize the impact of a media virus is to take away its fuel: our own inability to address its underlying code formations. It's not even a matter of recognizing the suicide bombers' agendas as valid. The crucial step is to correct our own cultural code—our own fear of a conversation that grapples with those agendas. This is the hard part. For to do that in earnest, the West would need to fess up to the true history of American involvement in Arab affairs over the past century (it's all in the history books, anyway—it's just a matter of admitting it openly) as well as expressing our true fear of losing access to precious oil, and our apprehension about sharing the planet with people we don't understand or trust. This need not amount to an admission of guilt—just a willingness to allow for a conversation.

Once the unexpressed agendas are

out of Pakistan.

More than any command structure, terrorist organization or ideology, there's an underlying mechanism propelling the growth and spread of suicide attacks. It's called a media virus.

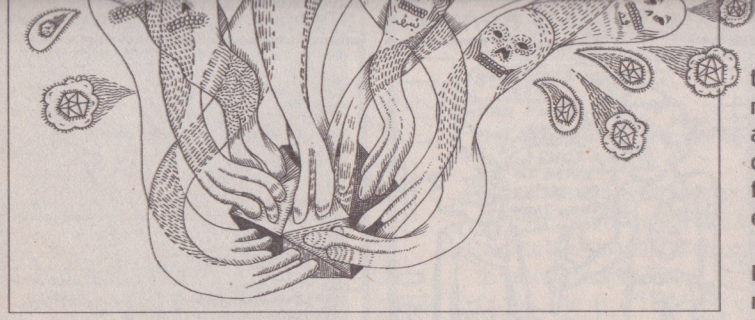
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It's not that one event causes the other; rather, suicidal people are waiting for a cue, or a pilot who is already careless or flying under the influence of alcohol finally ends up crossing the barrier that, subconsciously, he had been dangerously testing all along.

It is the mediaspace that allows for these clusters of sympathetic repetitions. Were a murder or suicide not covered in the paper, there would be no copycat events.

A "media virus"—a phenomenon I first wrote about in my book of the same name in 1994—depends on our newly complexified mediaspace to exist. Like biological viruses, media viruses have two main components: a sticky outer shell, and genetic code inside. The virus spreads if the shell is sticky enough to fool our cells into accepting them. The virus replicates if its code can successfully interpolate itself into the confused command structure of our cell's own code. If the virus succeeds in doing this, it turns the cell into a virus factory—the cell commits suicide in the virus's name.



DYLAN MARTORELL

WHEN ISSUES REMAIN CLOSETED, A CULTURE BECOMES MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE CONTAGION OF A MEDIA VIRUS.

The late '90s saw many performers, politicians, and even news stories vying for our attention and reaction by challenging confused, or obsolete cultural codes. Madonna, whose music wasn't particularly new or well-executed, nonetheless achieved a high profile because her work nested itself in our growing yet still unarticulated sense that women could enjoy sex or assume dominant sex roles. To a middle America still years away from accepting a female presidential candidate or lesbian talk show host, songs such as "Like a Virgin" provoked confusion, anger, and rage. Madonna pushed sexual buttons, but only because female sexuality was still a taboo subject. Madonna turned herself into a media virus, appeared in mutations from a *Sex* photo book to an "Express Yourself" anthem for repressed teen girls—and, in doing so, brought the sexual conversation from subtext into the light of day.

The Rodney King tape successfully challenged the unarticulated rage at the way white cops treat black men. The Rodney King virus spread not just because of its content, but because of its media shell. Never before had such violence been captured, randomly, by home video. The tape was shown around the world overnight on cable television because it demonstrated the power of the camcorder. The virus then replicated and spread because race relations and police brutality in American cities were social ills that just couldn't be talked about, yet. The Rodney King virus eventually led to urban rioting in dozen American cities, and succeeded in forcing a repressed conversation about faulty societal code into the open.

Suicide bombing is a media virus, albeit with very real effects. The sticky outer shell is the event itself—a suicide bombing gets covered on the news. It's huge news, especially if it occurs in a white western nation. Currently, it's the fastest spreading kind of news story there is. The code, like that of any successful media virus, challenges the unarticulated confusion over the relationship of the west to oil, Arabs, Islam, and post-colonialism. Actually, the virus fuels itself on rage going back as far as the Crusades, or certainly since the imposition of CIA-sponsored dictatorships.

When issues remain closeted, culture-wide cognitive dissonance only increases. This makes everyone susceptible to the contagion of a virus whose code can nest within this highly charged gap. For a select few cells within the cultural organism, bombers who can decipher the event.

Suicide bombing is the virus, using the perpetrator to activate others. It's not a person-to-person communication, anymore, but a viral transmission. And one that, without a more substantive form of intervention, is bound to reach epidemic proportions before it dies out.

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Once the unexpressed agendas are brought from subtext into the light of day, the confused code into which the virus nests itself will have been corrected and strengthened—along with the West's relationship to Islam.

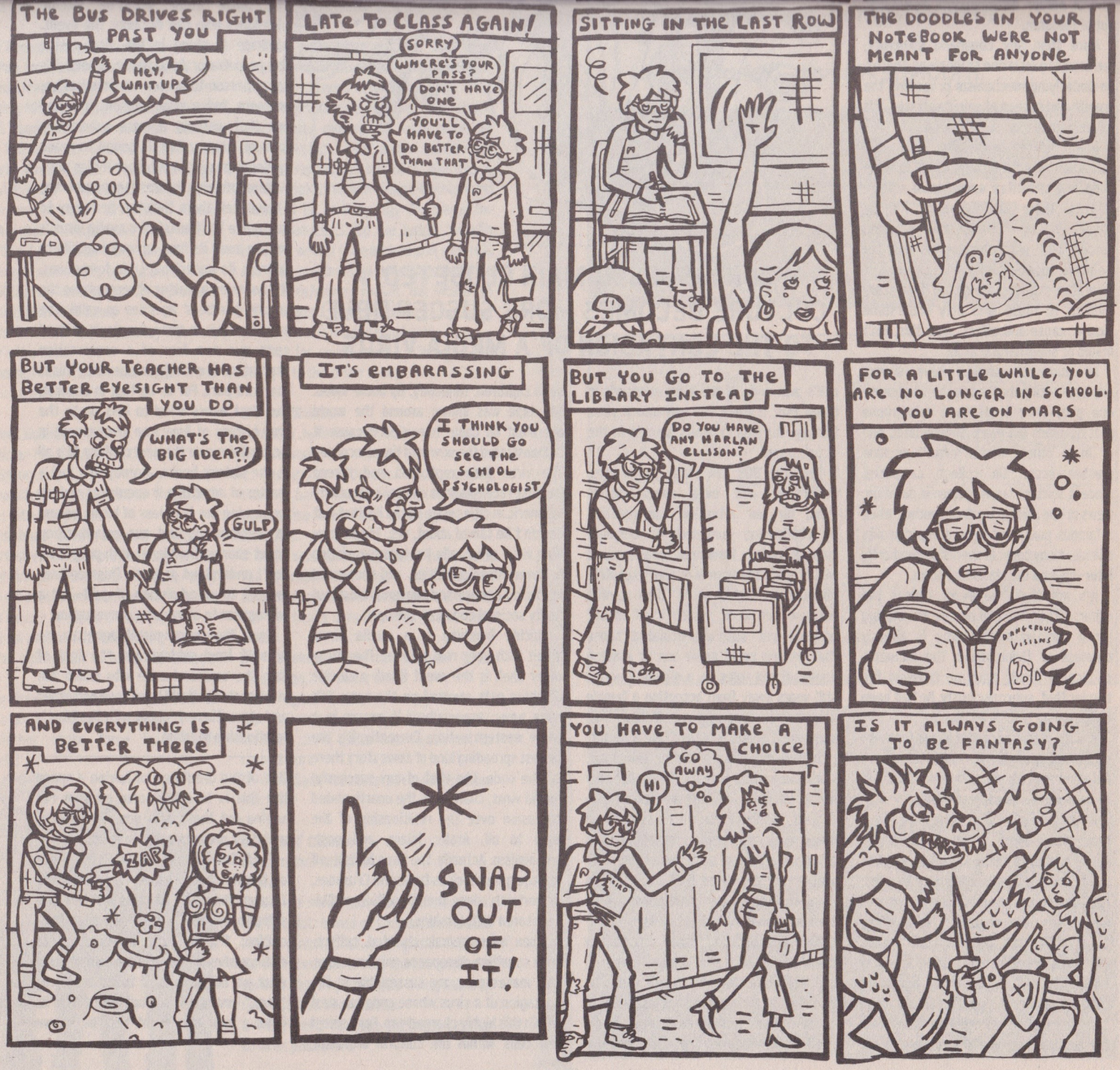
One of the great joys of having a space like this is to share some of what I'm seeing out there with you. Two people and their projects come to mind.

First, Ken Goffman, aka RU Sirius, wrote a terrific book called *Counterculture Through the Ages*, which is just out in a delightfully less-expensive paperback edition. If you ever wondered what distinguishes a true counterculture from what we might think of today simply as "cool," you owe it to yourself to read it. From a man who might best be known

(continued on page 69)

A LAST CRY FOR HELP (1)




THE BUS DRIVES RIGHT PAST YOU
HEY, WAIT UP
LATE TO CLASS AGAIN!
SORRY
WHERE'S YOUR PASS?
DON'T HAVE ONE
YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT
SITTING IN THE LAST ROW
THE DOODLES IN YOUR NOTEBOOK WERE NOT MEANT FOR ANYONE
BUT YOUR TEACHER HAS BETTER EYESIGHT THAN YOU DO
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?!
GULP
IT'S EMBARASSING
I THINK YOU SHOULD GO SEE THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST
BUT YOU GO TO THE LIBRARY INSTEAD
DO YOU HAVE ANY HARLAN ELLISON?
FOR A LITTLE WHILE, YOU ARE NO LONGER IN SCHOOL. YOU ARE ON MARS
DANGEROUS VISIONS
AND EVERYTHING IS BETTER THERE
ZAP
SNAP OUT OF IT!
YOU HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE
HI
GO AWAY
IS IT ALWAYS GOING TO BE FANTASY?

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SPOON

GIMME FICTION

"A reminder that in the right hands the most familiar things in rock n roll can have magic powers." - *Time*

"Listening to this album gives you the sense that, yes, something new can be done with pop music." - *Seattle Weekly*

Cold Wind 7-inch

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"Spoon continues to build one of the most consistent and distinctive bodies of work in rock." - ★★★★ *allmusic.com*

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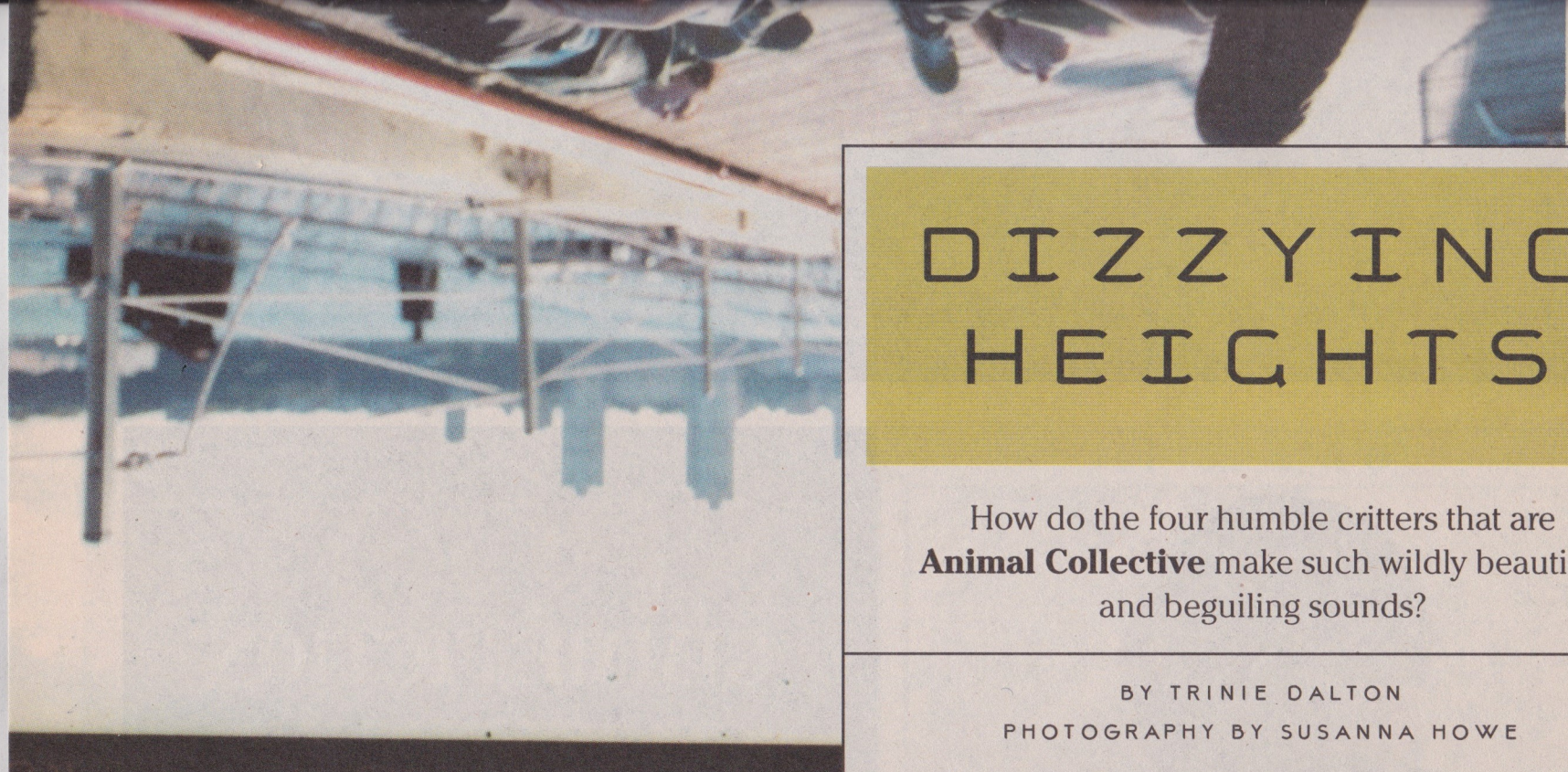


DIZZYING HEIGHTS

How do the four humble critters that are **Animal Collective** make such wildly beautiful and beguiling sounds?

BY TRINIE DALTON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSANNA HOWE



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BY TRINIE DALTON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSANNA HOWE

As pathetic as this sounds, I originally started listening to Animal Collective because they were an "animal band," and I make a point of hearing all new animal bands because I'm obsessed with animals. There are so many animal bands these days, especially lupine ones: Wolf Eyes, Wolf Parade, We Are Wolves, Wolfmother…I figure anyone who names their band after animals must like animals too, so we have something in common, and maybe they're also into classic animal bands, like the Animals and the Turtles. So far, this theory for checking out new bands has worked, and I like most animal bands. But Animal Collective are by far the best. They're King of the Jungle.

This is an especially lame confession because the members of Animal Collective barely even like having a name; they'd much prefer to be individuals who come together in various combos and in various locations to make intriguingly titled albums, like *Danse Manatee*, *Campfire Songs*, or *Here Comes the Indian*, sans band name. That's one refreshing thing about Animal Collective: they aren't glory hogs. In animal terms, they're like prairie dogs, bees or penguins—humble critters that understand the definition of teamwork. In the beginning, Animal Collective often wore masks and costumes hiding their individual identities, and they've always used nicknames to keep alive the secret society element of what they do: Dave Portner is Avey Tare, Brian Weitz is Geologist, Josh Dibbs is Deakin, and Noah Lennox is Panda Bear. Having a band name is too traditional, they say; they only have one because record labels have told them that listeners need to identify the group as a cohesive, named unit.

Which is important, because Animal Collective are one of those rare bands who sound completely different live and on record. *Sung Tongs*, their last full-length album, is infused with psychedelic wall-of-sound production, Brian Wilson-style. *Sung Tongs* is so classic it gives me chills. I imagine *Sung Tongs* on the cover of that *Arthur* issue 50 years from now featuring the best albums of the past century. The cool part is, I'll recall how I nearly went deaf hearing tweaky live versions of harmonious tunes like "Leaf House" and "Kids On Holiday." On headphones, certain Animal Collective songs sound sleepy and hypnotic, while live those same songs make the club's floor vibrate from heavy bass and guitar distortion. Hearing Animal Collective live is nearly my favorite pastime. Recently, while living in Berlin, I was so dying to see them that I almost flew hundreds of miles to southern France to catch their gig. Getting a grip, I reminded myself that this was a little extreme, not to mention expensive. Each show is different, though: live versions of songs render them unrecognizable or mutate into new songs, so you can't say, *I'll just stay home and listen to the album.*

Feels, Animal Collective's new release, is heavily injected with sentiment without being sappy. Dedicated to such lofty romantic themes as Love, Purple (the color of passion) and (they say) "synchronicity, or connections between people," *Feels* is highly emotive. As opposed to *Sung Tongs*' choral vocal layerings and druggy nods to *Smiley Smile*, *Feels* contains fewer vocal harmonies but compensates with an abundance of rock-out moments balanced by a "warm hum" of instruments. I can't wait to see these songs performed live, since the instrumentation on *Feels* is so elusive. This new record also further distinguishes Animal Collective from the "freak-folk" bands they've sometimes been lumped together with. I never thought they sounded even remotely folky; *Feels* instead sounds a lot more influenced by

What are your ideas about collectives? Animal Collective's lineup is constantly changing, so your aesthetic is extremely dynamic. Live, for instance, you always play new songs instead of the songs from the album you're touring for.

Josh (Deakin): The word "collective" is oddly touchy for us because it has a certain political air. The idea of calling ourselves a collective was for our own state of mind. We weren't thinking of it in a broader sense. We're a fairly exclusive collective. There are people are in our lives that we work with who we consider part of it, in a way, but we aren't a collective in the big sense. We've known each other since we were kids, and really enjoy doing this together. We don't want to just form a regular band where it's like "he plays guitar, he plays bass, and I sing." We came up with the idea in college, when we couldn't always all work together. Originally, our records had their own titles without found out later that schools of fish, gaggles of geese, and murders of crows are actually called animal collectives.

So you aren't a political band?

Brian (Geologist): We're not a political band, really. Some of us are interested in politics and policy and current events, some of us aren't. And we have narrowly different opinions, but always to the left side of the political spectrum. When we've been approached to do political things, we've turned them down. But we could all really get behind the chance to do something related to environmental policy. A lot of the sounds I use are natural sounds from field recordings and processed animal sounds, but I don't make that known to the public as a statement. That's why it's been important to me to devote my free time to environmental issues. When I consider what I want to contribute to the world

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Animal Collective are childhood friends. Noah and Josh met in second grade in their hometown, Baltimore. In 1996, Josh hooked up with Brian and Dave, who were also high school buddies from Maryland. They all hung out sporadically throughout college, and by 2000, they were all living in New York, where they recorded and released *Spirit They're Gone, Spirit They've Vanished,* which gave them their first taste of success. Since then, they've made several albums and started a record label, Paw Tracks, home to artists like Ariel Pink and The Peppermints. *Prospect Hummer*, their last record, is testament to all the European touring they've done; they met and recruited Vashti Bunyan in England for vocals on it. Three of the band left New York years ago—Noah for Lisbon, Brian for D.C., and Dave for Europe—so Animal Collective functions via satellite, in a way, until they convene for recording sessions and tours. Even interviewing them was a feat—I received four separate phone calls from around the world—although I really enjoyed it because Animal Collective were so friendly. Each man spoke highly of the others, discussing how the group sound has evolved instead of geeking out on who plays what. They gave uncannily similar answers, and Brian confessed that Animal Collective may know each other "too well." I had this feeling before, but I know it now—Animal Collective are four best friends committed to experimenting and having fun.

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Brian (Geologist): Our labels told us that fans need to be able to identify a band by name so they know what to buy. The first label we started was called *Animal*, so we became *Animal Collective*. I found out later that schools of fish, gaggles of geese, and murders of crows are actually called animal collectives.

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Does politics have a place in music, or is that an automatic cliché these days?

Brian (Geologist): Oh, music is absolutely a good place to express political opinions! But you have to make a decision as a band what your message is going to be, and we've decided on exploring other themes, like our lives and relationships, our experiences.

There's an interest in '60s revivalism

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right now, especially with the "freak-folk" bands, maybe because people see some parallels between today's political climate and the Vietnam Era. You'd expect the politics of the '60s to filter through these new bands.

Brian (Geologist): A lot of the '60s revivalists or the freak-folk people don't seem to be getting engaged politically. I don't listen to all of that so much; like you said, we aren't really part of that scene. I think maybe they're doing the opposite thing, disassociating themselves from politics, even though I know some of them care about the issues. But I'm surprised that a lot of *mainstream* bands aren't commenting on anything. The last Green Day album was pretty bad, but I respect them because they're the only band out there that says anything in a time when people think that punk is hip. Green Day and the Dixie Chicks!

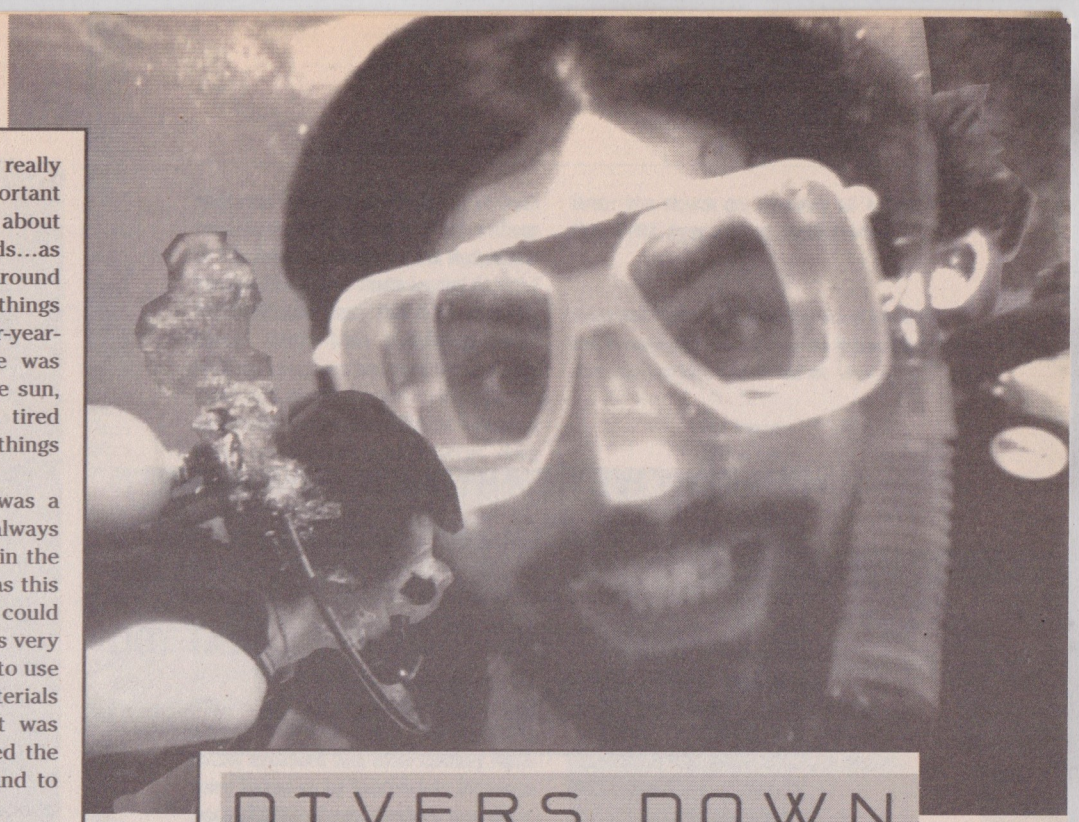
Although, Sun City Girls integrate politics and music really well. Bands like them get attention in *Arthur*, but not in a lot of other places. They're sort of intentionally underground, so their message doesn't get out there so much. But what they do, and what they're doing with their Sublime Frequencies label, is exposing you to other cultures. I've been listening to them since I was in high school, and they've definitely opened my eyes. Not that I agree with everything they say, but they do provoke a lot of thought. Society would be better off if everybody listened to them. American Imperialism in the Middle East has been something they've cared about since the 80s, and now it's in the forefront on the news.

Animal Collective is known for its sincerity, for capturing childlike innocence through sound. Also, your music is packed with references to my dad's records. But really when music became important to me, it wasn't so much about listening to music on records...as a child I heard everything around me as music, including things like the weather. As a four-year-old, everything around me was visceral. Whether it was the sun, or someone talking, how tired or excited I was, all those things turned into sound.

Then, finding carpentry was a big step forward for me. I'd always worked in my head. I lived in the world of thoughts. There was this moment when I realized I could affect my environment in this very physical way. I learned how to use my body, to use tools and materials to make something, and it was empowering. It's transformed the way I relate to the world and to music.

Dave (Avey): In terms of us all trying to work together, the nature thing's definitely there. Brian and I grew up spending time outdoors while listening to music. We didn't party so much, we just hung out with a stereo outside. We lived in a forested area. Driving around the Maryland countryside listening to Incredible String Band, that's what I connected music to. The way we approach songwriting is very natural. The most important thing for us is to take sound and create some sort of individual landscape for each song rather than thinking of a song as something you put on in your car and tap your feet to. We put effort into listening to music.

We have a youthful way of looking at the world. Experiencing everything with a sense of wonder gets lost as you're sucked into life's repetition. Even in the most boring situation, there's something. That song on *Sung Tongs*, "Kids on Holiday," represents how even standing in line at the airport becomes interesting when you



DIVERS DOWN

Animal Collective's Geologist and Deakin share the scuba experience with Morgan V. Lebus

When and where were these photos [printed above] taken?

Deakin: We went diving off the east side of Marathon Key in Herman's Hole. The visibility underwater was crystal. Herman is a very large moray eel who no longer lives in his hole—he's relocated to an aquarium in Miami.

Isn't scuba diving expensive?

Deakin: The toughest part is getting certified, which costs about $500. I was lucky enough to have a dive master friend who certified me for free. The most expensive part of scuba diving is the travel. You can dive almost anywhere, but unless you're pretty gung ho about it, diving in the local quarry is less than choice. You want to go somewhere that has a a tropical vibe, with lots of reef life and clear waters. Once you're there, a full day of diving with boat and and gear rental will run less than $100.

Geologist: While this is true, if you are into cold water diving, there are some good lake spots in New England. I've never done any cold water dives because you need to buy a dry suit.

Your most fascinating underwater find?

Deakin: It's all fascinating: scuba diving is the best drug ever. My first open water dive (off a boat, away from the shore) was in South Carolina. The visibility was low and we didn't see much more than a few barrucada and some flounder (a flat bottom feeder fish with both eyes on one side of its head). On the way up the surface I couldn't see the bottom or the surface but off in front of me about fifteen feet away was a jellyfish. A very simple translucent specimen, but I could've watched sway it for hours.

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Animal Collective is known for its sincerity, for capturing childlike innocence through sound. Also, your music is packed with references to nature and emotional states. I often think of the weather when I listen to you. Maybe it's your choice of samples—you re-create environments.

Josh (Deakin): That's exactly what we're going for. As much as writing about things in our lives now, we write about childhood, and what's it like deciding how to grow up. It's a way to stay true to childhood feelings. They're so easy to lose as you get older. We don't want to act like children for the rest of our lives, but we want to keep our openness. It's funny, the last guy I was talking to asked me what my first experiences with music were, and I talked about listening to make something, and it was empowering. It's transformed the way I relate to the world and to music.

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Noah (Panda Bear): This album's the same and different at the same time in terms of childhood stuff. We're talking about more mature adult topics, so there is a bit of the sour mixed in with the sweet. The way we like to describe experiences from childhood or see things in a childlike way, the uninhibited, anything goes, everything is new attitude, that's all still there on *Feels*. In that way, our music is always the same. Now, the kinds of relationships we talk about are more adult, but the spirit of creating the music is still

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Geologist: In the Gulf of California I went diving off the coast of an island that was home to a sea lion colony. The pups had just been born and they were extremely curious. I also saw a seahorse there—they're pretty rare. My big dream though, is to see whale sharks, mantas, leafy sea dragons, and a school of hammerhead.

If you could dive anywhere on earth, where would it be?

Geologist: The arctic or antarctic. The way the light filters through the ice is supposed to be amazing. I'd also like to dive in the Andamen sea off the coast of Thailand, but further north, closer to Burma.

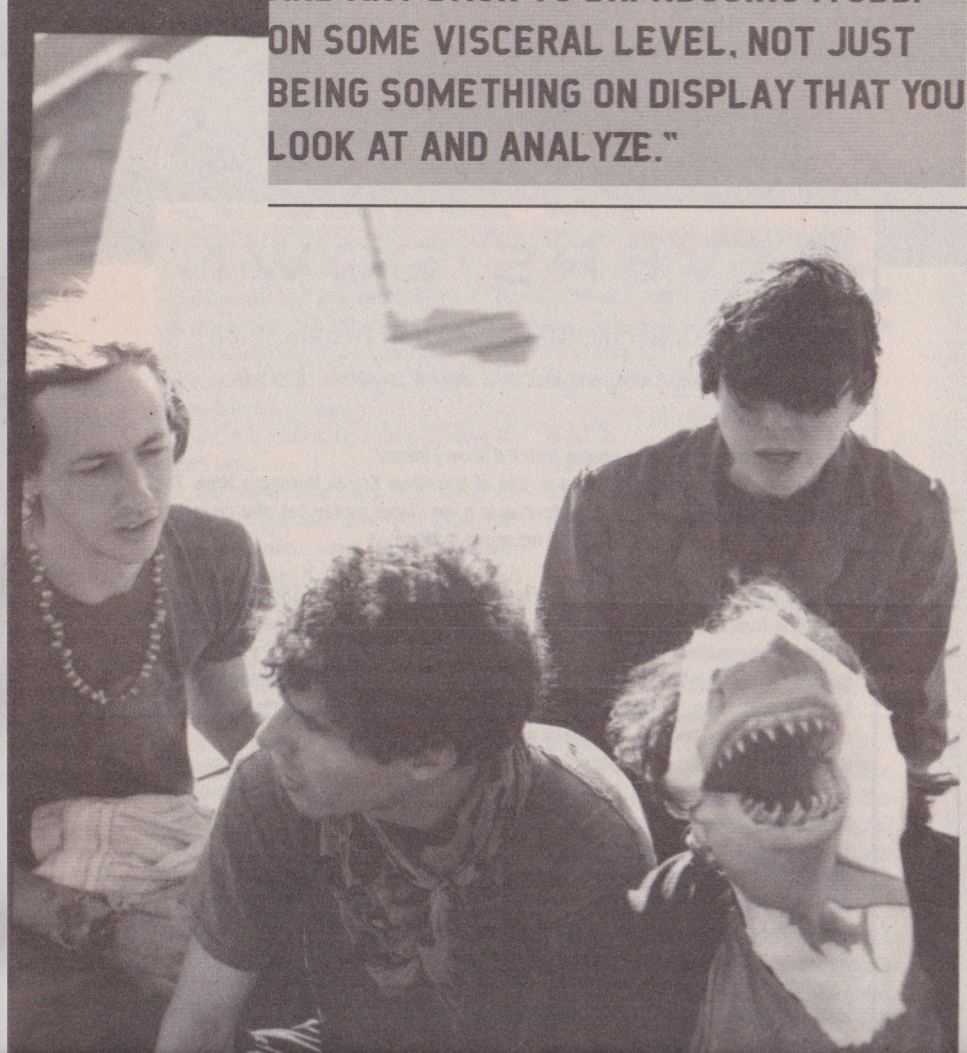
Deakin: I think for me it is more a matter of *when*. Coral is being damaged at an intense rate and a lot of marine life is gone. I imagine that diving 100 years ago would have been a dramatically different experience, regardless of where you did it.

Your deepest dive, ever?

Deakin: South Carolina at about 68 feet down.

Geologist: Deep dives are not necessarily the best because your bottom time is extremely limited. With a normal tank rig you get about 15 minutes of dive time at 90 feet before you have to to a shallower depth and decompress. However, a 30-foot dive can have amazing stuff as well and your dive can be an hour long. My deepest was just above 100. The limit was 90 feet but it was a wall dive—the sea floor was about 65 feet and it stretches out from the island and then you reach the edge and the wall drops 6,000 feet! We swam over the edge and dropped to 90 feet and viewed the wall along our side. It's an amazing feeling to look down and see nothing but darkness and try to comprehend the bottom being *6,000* feet below you.

DEAKIN: "WE'RE TRYING TO GET MUSIC AND ART BACK TO EXPRESSING ITSELF ON SOME VISCERAL LEVEL, NOT JUST BEING SOMETHING ON DISPLAY THAT YOU LOOK AT AND ANALYZE."



anything goes. Keep it new, fresh, and explore stuff.

Brian (Geologist): Part of the reason we started playing live and releasing records, in 2000 I think, was to react against what we saw happening in late '90s indie rock. It was so intellectual and a lot of it lacked emotion. There isn't a lot of irony in our music because we relate to music on a more pure, emotional level.

A lot of us have been in more serious relationships this past year, so we figured *Feels* would be our "love" record. It's not exactly childlike this time. Only some of our records really touch on childlike innocence, or the innocence of nature, but there's still similar themes throughout about touching our lives and feelings, instead of intellectual concepts that we don't have any connection to.

In some songs, you remember being somewhere as a kid in the past tense, while in other songs, like in Prospect Hummer*'s "I Remember Learning How to Dive," you recall a childhood memory in the present tense. Then in your new song "Flesh Canoe" you're a kid making faces in the mirror, totally present tense. You're so good at confusing time.*

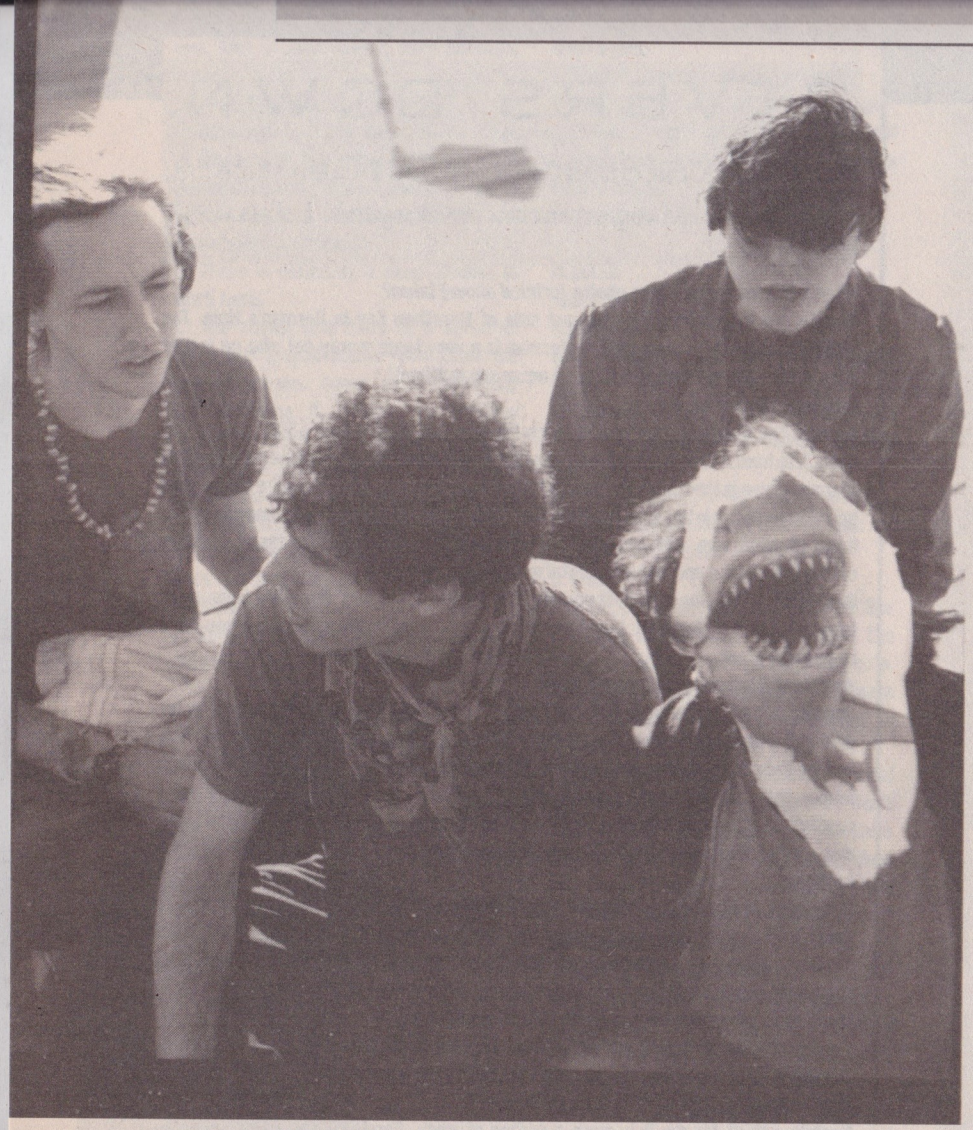
Dave (Avey): Things change so fast now, even from month to month. In terms of relationships, the way we deal with people has changed so much. Career-wise, we haven't noticed the changes so much because it's been gradual, but there's more physical distance between us now.

We like confusion, and confusing the audience. Sometimes we even confuse ourselves! Early on, we were so intent on playing at least one show per month in NYC, something new each time, so we'd only have a week to practice before the show. Sometimes

but there have been lots of new approaches to music and art in the past five, six years. We're trying to get music and art back to expressing itself on some visceral level, not just being something on display that you look at and analyze. There shouldn't be a wall between us and the audience. A lot of bands are into creating physical sound right now, and some of it I'm not even that psyched on, but I'm glad it's happening. The fact that a magazine like *Arthur* is doing so well these days is a reflection of that. I don't think *Arthur* would have happened in 1996. A lot of people are looking for things to connect them right now. I love it when people are seeing and hearing us in a new way, instead of just watching a band play.

Part of the confusion you're going for seems to stem from the horror movie soundtrack influence. On Feels*, the horrific and the psychedelic are intertwined. For example, the feeling of suspense in some songs like "Banshee Beat," where there's a quiet start, it gets louder, you sustain tension where I'd expect the song to explode, but it never does. Or, the echoes in "Turn Into Something" sound ghostly, it sounds like a carnival nightmare or an evil farm song.*

Brian (Geologist): A formative moment for Dave and I was when we watched *The Shining* once in high school. We'd seen it before, but this time we just watched it just for the music, and got really into the soundtrack. We realized that pure sounds are music too. We grew up on indie rock, punk, and hair metal, so we thought that music had these traditional elements. We learned how abstract sound conveys the same emotion that a lyrical and melodic song can. So we started making horror movie soundtracks and abstract



Analyze this: Animal Collective at play.

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We like confusion, and confusing the audience. Sometimes we even confuse ourselves! Early on, we were so intent on playing at least one show per month in NYC, something new each time, so we'd only have a week to practice before the show. Sometimes we didn't even play the set we planned. We never knew how we'd make it through. It was so open, that if things fell apart we had to figure out how to keep it going. You don't want to stop in the middle of a set. Even if it was just clapping our hands, something was always happening, then things grew out of that. That's where the confusion and rise in emotion comes from.

Noah (Panda Bear): Confusion is another way to describe childhood illusion. When I was younger, I'd get fevers, so sick that I would feel crazy. I would go to places I'd never been to, in terms of hallucinating. Weird kid dreams are really confusing.

Josh (Deakin): I hate to generalize, hearing us in a new way, instead of just watching a band play.

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In "Banshee Beat," there's no direct reference to *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* per se, but there are like three different recordings of Josh, Dave, and I making our way through the woods at night, having to break through branches, pushing thorns away. So you can compare it to that scene in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* where Marianne's stuck in the brush, running away from Leatherface. When we discussed how to mix that song, the movie came up because you're





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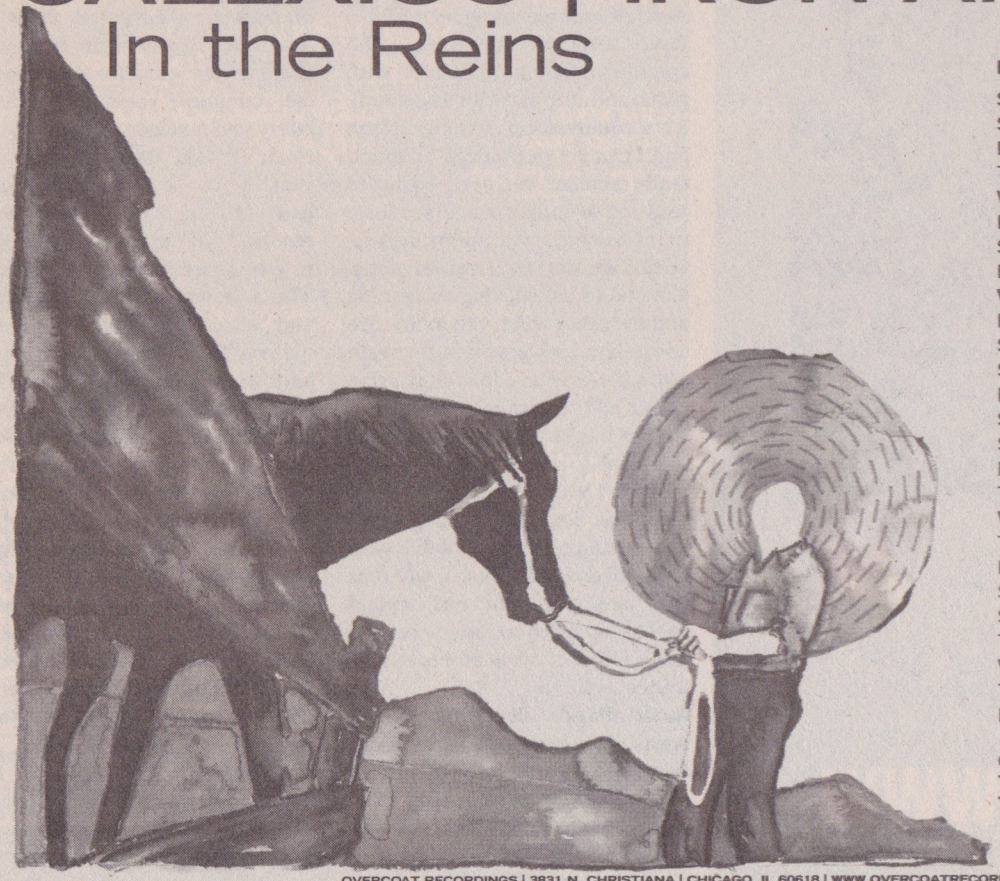
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The Brave and The Bold

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GEOLOGIST: "WE COMPOSED ONE SONG LIKE A CHINESE LANDSCAPE PAINTING. SOMEBODY'S PART WAS THE CLOUDS, SOMEBODY'S PART WAS THE MOUNTAINS, SOMEBODY WAS THE LITTLE YETI."



supposed to be hearing the song through the sounds, through the branches. Like you have to claw away the branches to hear where the song is coming from.

Dave (Avey): In cases like "Banshee Beat," it would be too easy to go for the crescendo rock. You could do an explosion, but it's nice to know something else will have a stronger effect. As far as soundtracks, I like the more texture oriented soundtracks—like *The Shining*, by Kristoff Penderecki. The coolest part in horror films is when the murder is happening. Everything becomes so insane. Anything goes in that genre. Dwarves will appear, but since some scenes make so little sense, the dwarves are humorous but also dark and confusing.

Noah (Panda Bear): The first part in "Turn Into Something" is all Dave's work, and the high singing in the last part is mine. I was singing to my baby. We did that song before she was born, and I was telling her how I wanted to hook her up and show her good stuff. I want to teach her about the supernatural things in the world that make life worth living.

On the new album more than ever, there's a dizziness: lots of looped effects, buzzing guitars, repetitive vocals, and lyrics are abstracted, like in "Bees" the vocal focus is on the long vowel sound. What are some of your recording secrets?

Dave (Avey): In "Bees," the spinning in circles is created with piano and autoharp. But in general, it's a combination of things. Noah and I can get our voices to sound really similar. We used to listen to a lot of Indian singers, music that has to do with following one voice. We do vocal experiments, like one of us will sing something and the other will try to follow. We the color of it. You can tweak it any which way you want. For some people, it's all about the message, but we have a lot of fun making weird sounds with our voices. With instruments and effects, one goal of ours is to make it NOT sound like what we're using, to disguise the means. But with the voice, you don't need to use effects on it so much because you can mask it in all kinds of ways. It's the ultimate instrument.

Brian (Geologist): We composed "Bees" like a Chinese landscape painting. Somebody's part was the clouds, somebody's part was the mountains, somebody was the little Yeti. We had our friend Eyvind in for violin, and when we explained this to him, he totally got it.

A lot of times we have an idea like this, or make up our own movies to our songs. We'll work on a song and see what imagery would fit it, or imagine what a video for it would look like. We make songs to describe something we have in our minds, as an audio representation of that scene or story, rather than an explanation of it. "Grass" is another one that we composed with a visual, at least during the bridge. We thought of it like a Disney movie with Dave coming out of this house, singing the song, flowers dancing around, windows of the house coming alive.

At the same time, though, the dizziness is pleasant to listen to. As far as visceral music goes, and wanting your audience to physically feel your music, Feels *never aims to give you a headache!*

Noah (Panda Bear): In the past year, a lot of the issues we've had with each other have been resolved. We've always been tight in the sense that a relationship with a person is an ongoing thing, and of course it's not always

THE MOUNTAINS, SOMEBODY WAS THE LITTLE YETI."



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Noah (Panda Bear): Vocally, it starts when you go, "I want to use my voice to sing but not just to sing words. I want to use my voice like an instrument." There are all kinds of things you can do with your voice in terms of tone, pitch,

for violin, and when we explained this to him, he totally got it.

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Noah (Panda Bear): In the past year, a lot of the issues we've had with each other have been resolved. We've always been tight in the sense that a relationship with a person is an ongoing thing, and of course it's not always perfect. We've made huge steps, and we understand each other better than ever. We're having so much fun hanging out. Now, since we live far apart, when we do get together to play music or tour we're immediately psyched to be best friends again. Three out of four of us have been affected by love in the past year, so there's lots of emotion there. *Feels* sounds positive because it's all about good times. There's no room for abrasion on this one because everything is sweet. No matter how much work I do, I'm happy to do it.

MAI DOON IZAHN

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ADRIAN TOMINE & SETH: IN CONVERSATION

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10/29/2005 –TORONTO, ON: IFOA (ticketed) www.readings.org
Panel with Charles Burns and Chris Ware!
11/02/2005 – VANCOUVER, BC: Sophia's Books www.sophiabooks.com
11/03/2005 – SEATTLE, WA: The University Bookstore
www.bookstore.washington.edu Interviewed by Gary Groth!

Seth with Adrian Tomine for OPTIC NERVE #10 and Yoshihiro Tatsumi's THE PUSH MAN:

11/05/2005 – LOS ANGELES, CA: Skylight Books www.skylightbooks.com
11/07/2005 – CHICAGO, IL: Quimby's Books www.quimbys.com Interviewed by Dan Raeburn!
11/09/2005 – NEW YORK, NY: The Strand www.strandbooks.com

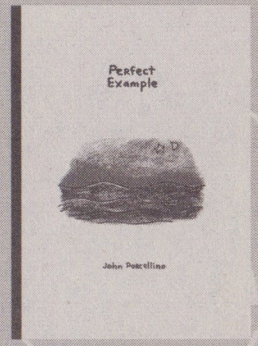




PYONGYANG
GUY DELISLE

"With a delicate pencil and a droll, occasionally outraged sensibility, [Delisle] captures the inanities and insanities of Pyongyang... [This book is] a master class in the medium's narrative possibilities."
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"Delisle is a wry but unsparing guide to his Axis Of Evil destination, a place that's in some respects not as bad as he's been led to believe, and in others, much worse...[His] cartoony style and animator's sensibility prove especially well-suited to capturing the absurdity of life under a dictatorship."
—The Onion



PERFECT EXAMPLE
JOHN PORCELLINO

"Lately, whenever I think of John Porcellino's comics, I think of a simple picture he recently drew of himself looking out his bathroom window in the morning at some passing clouds, inspired by the day's possibility, and it always prompts a memory I've had of myself feeling the same thing just for a second, and I feel good, for a second. All of his comics work this way, adding up to an experience that is quiet, sanguine, reassuring, beautiful, and without pretension, regardless of subject; it's odd that his retelling of his life would make me feel happy to be alive for the time that I'm reading it, but it always does."
—Chris Ware, author/cartoonist of
Jimmy Corrigan: Smartest Boy on Earth

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NOM (RUSSIA) "Russisches Schwein"
BORIS KOVACS (SERBIA) "Ritual Nova"

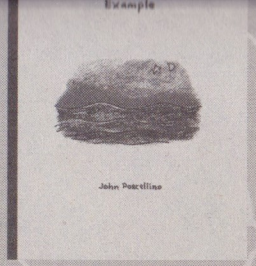
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11/07/2005 – CHICAGO, IL: Quimby's Books www.quimbys.com Interviewed by Dan Raeburn!
11/09/2005 – NEW YORK, NY: The Strand www.strandbooks.com





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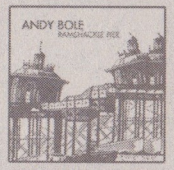
TOD DOCKSTADER / DAVID MYERS "Bijou" due Oct. '05

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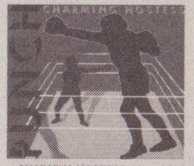
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ANDY BOLE "Ramshackle Pier"



CHARMING HOSTESS "Punch"



HET "Let's Het"



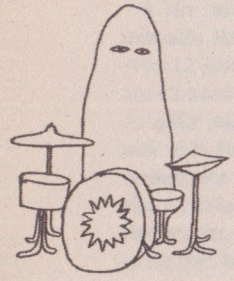
CATHERINE JAUNIAUX with TIM HODGKINSON "Fluvial"


MCCB "Things From The Past"


VENUS HANDCUFFS "Venus Handcuffs"

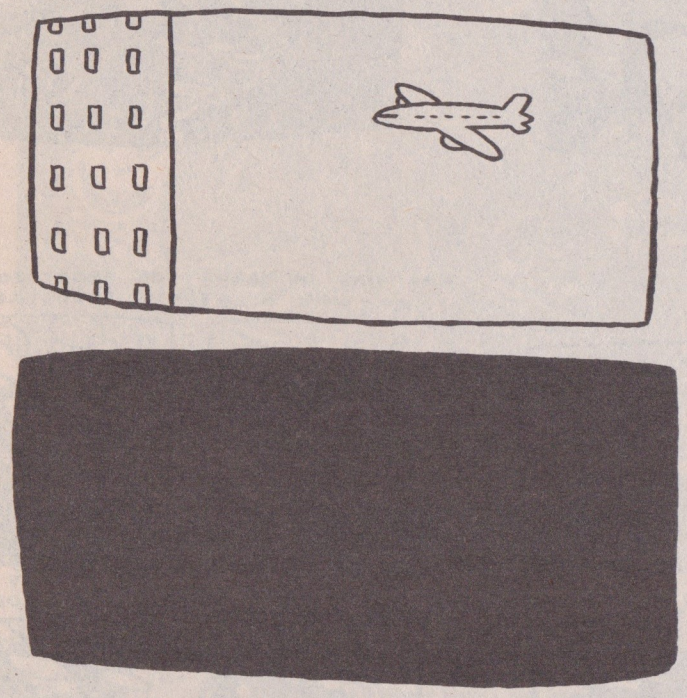


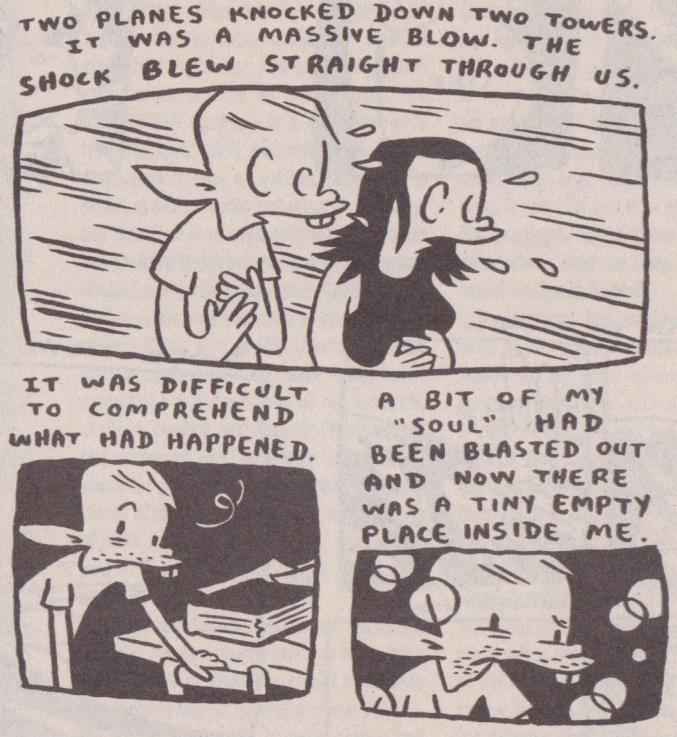
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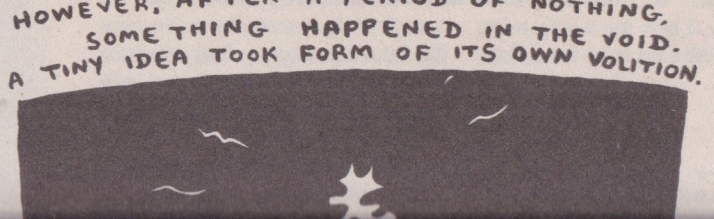
REINVENTING EVERYTHING

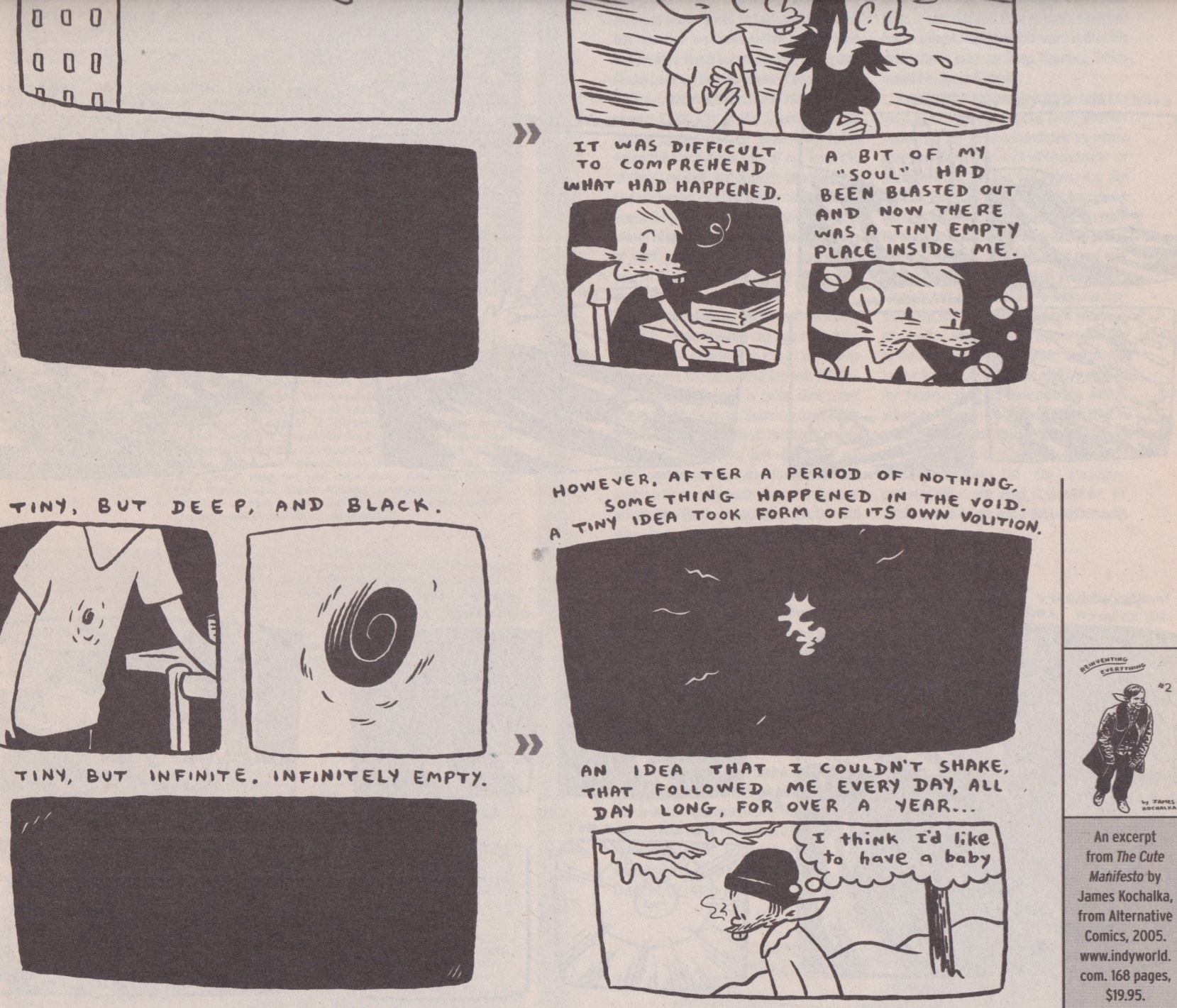
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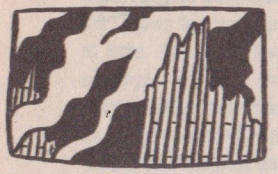




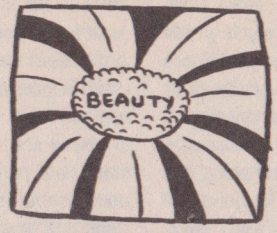


An excerpt from *The Cute Manifesto* by James Kochalka, from Alternative Comics, 2005. www.indyworld.com. 168 pages, $19.95.

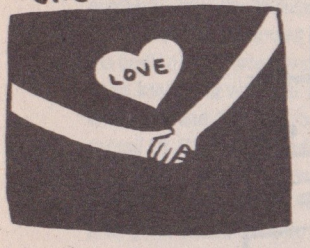
YES, UGLINESS, HATRED, DEATH, AND DESTRUCTION STARED US IN THE FACE.



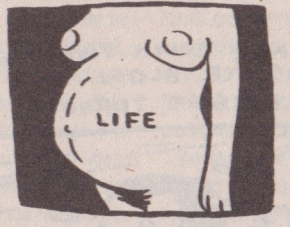
HOWEVER, FACED WITH UGLINESS, THERE WAS ONLY ONE CHOICE:



FACED WITH HATE, THERE WAS ONLY ONE CHOICE:



FACED WITH DEATH AND DESTRUCTION, THERE WAS ONLY ONE CHOICE:



OUR LIVES WOULD CHANGE FOREVER, BUT THAT'S BETTER THAN STAGNATION.



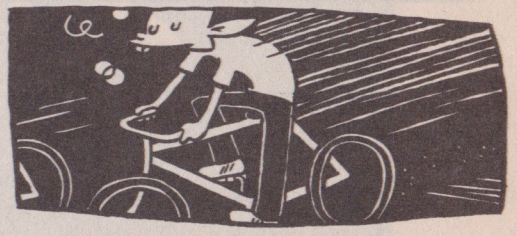
WE TALKED IT OVER A LOT, WEIGHED THE PROS AND CONS, BUT IT WAS REALLY BEYOND OUR CHOOSING. HE BEGAN AS A SPARK OF AN IDEA, AND THEN THE SPARK CAUGHT OUR THOUGHTS ON FIRE. IT'S LIKE HE WAS WILLING HIMSELF INTO EXISTENCE.



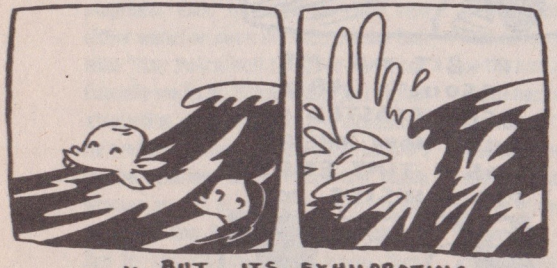
I KNEW THAT AS HIS FIRE WOULD RAGE, SO WOULD OUR OLD LIVES BE BURNED AWAY.



SO WHY NOT GO OUT IN A BLAZE OF GLORY? WE PARTIED HARD THAT SUMMER, AS IF WE WERE SAYING GOODBYE TO OURSELVES. RIDING BIKES DRUNK AT 4:00 AM WITH MY EYES CLOSED FELT LIKE THE ULTIMATE FREEDOM.



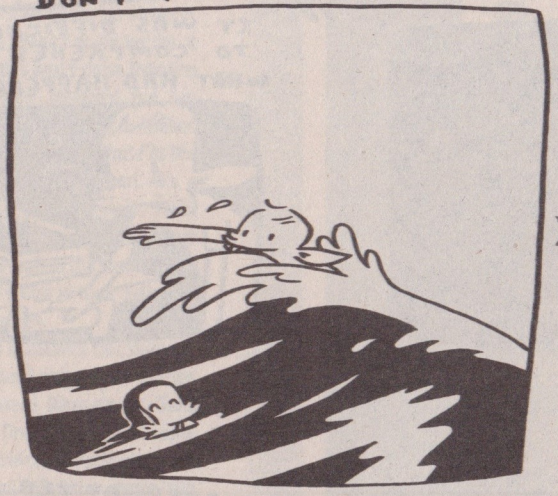
LIFE CAN KNOCK YOU AROUND...



... BUT ITS EXHILARATING.



DON'T FIGHT LIFE!



AMY WAS IN LABOR FOR ABOUT 20 HOURS. IT WAS A HEROIC STRUGGLE.



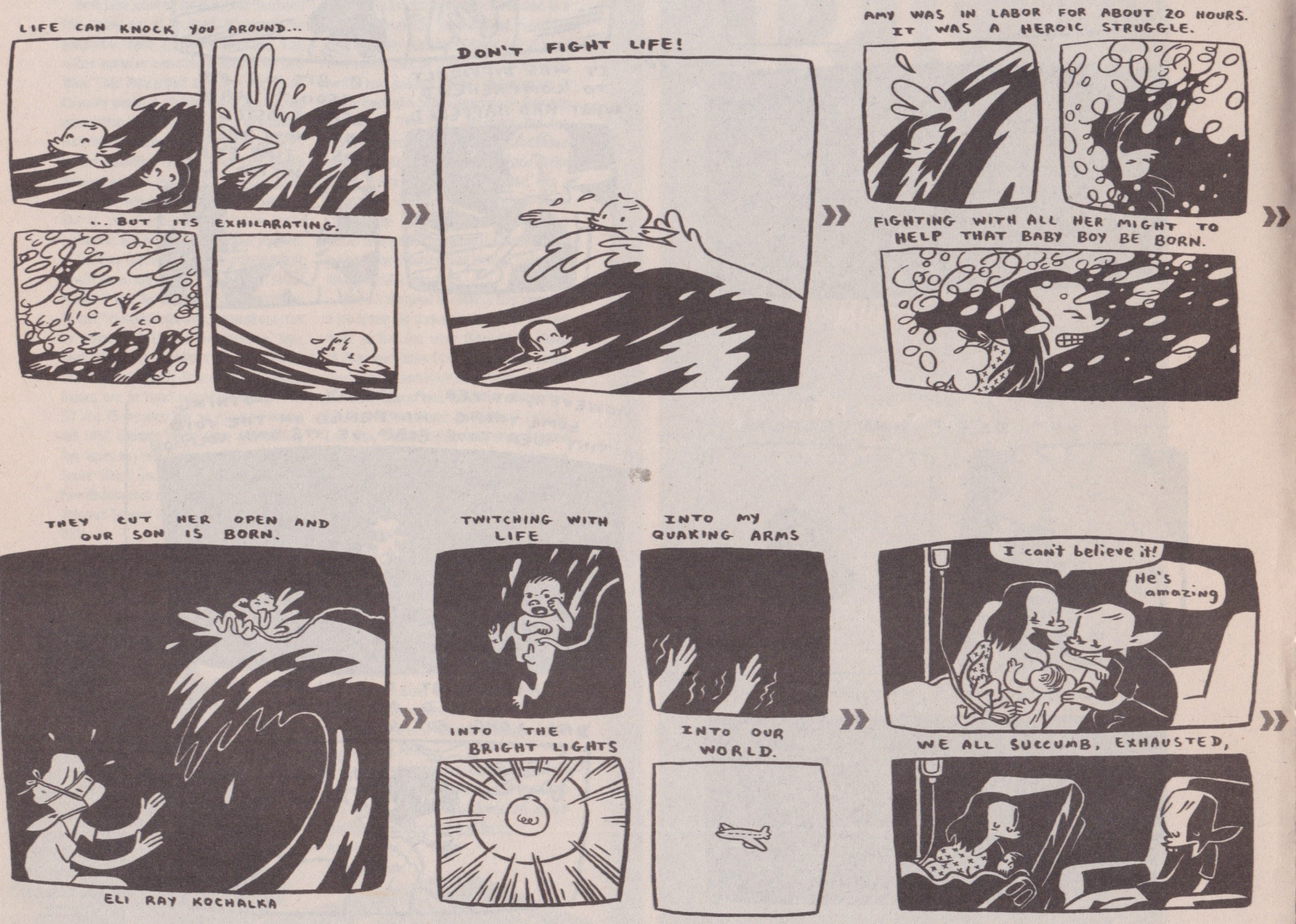
FIGHTING WITH ALL HER MIGHT TO HELP THAT BABY BOY BE BORN.

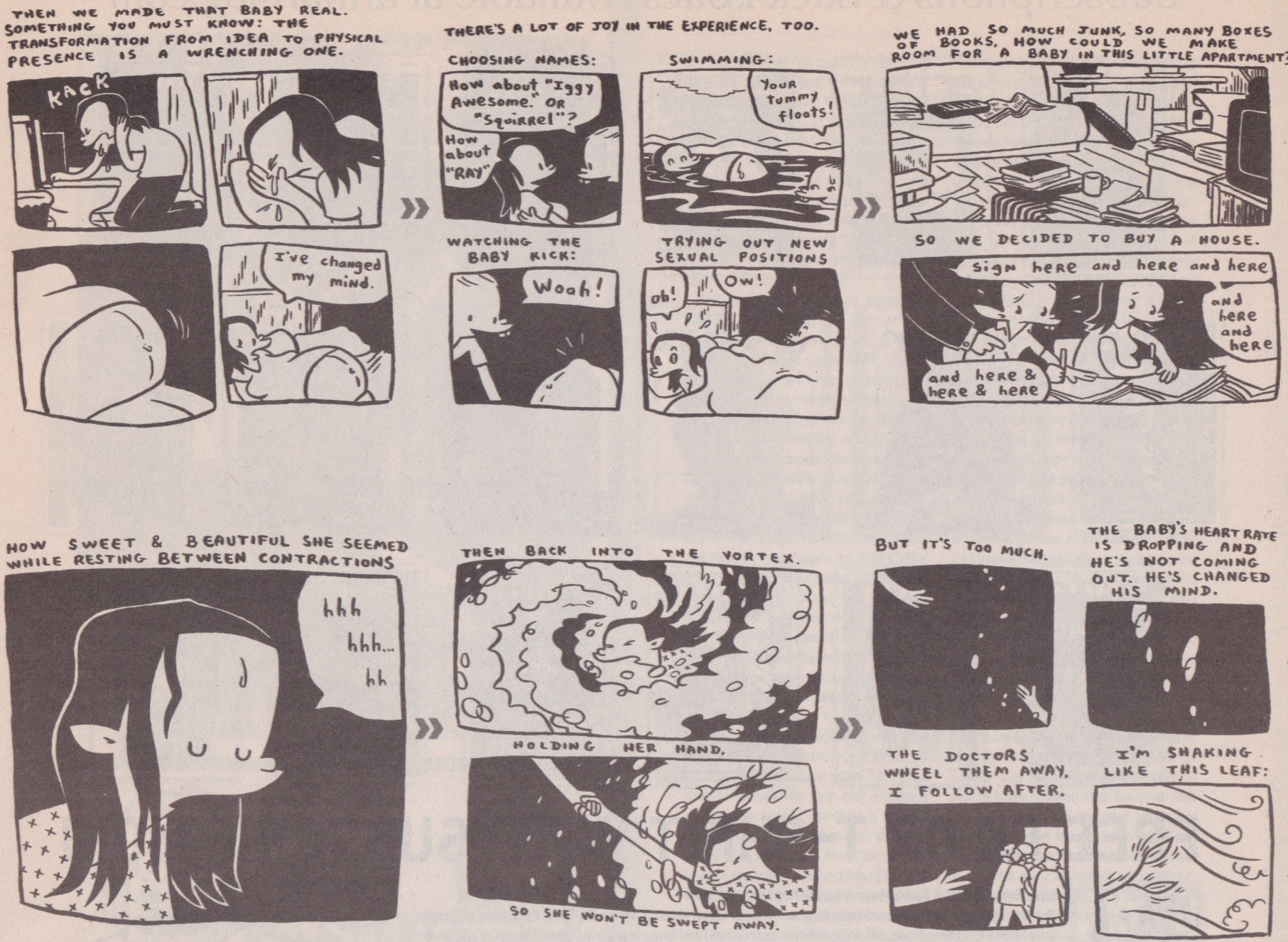


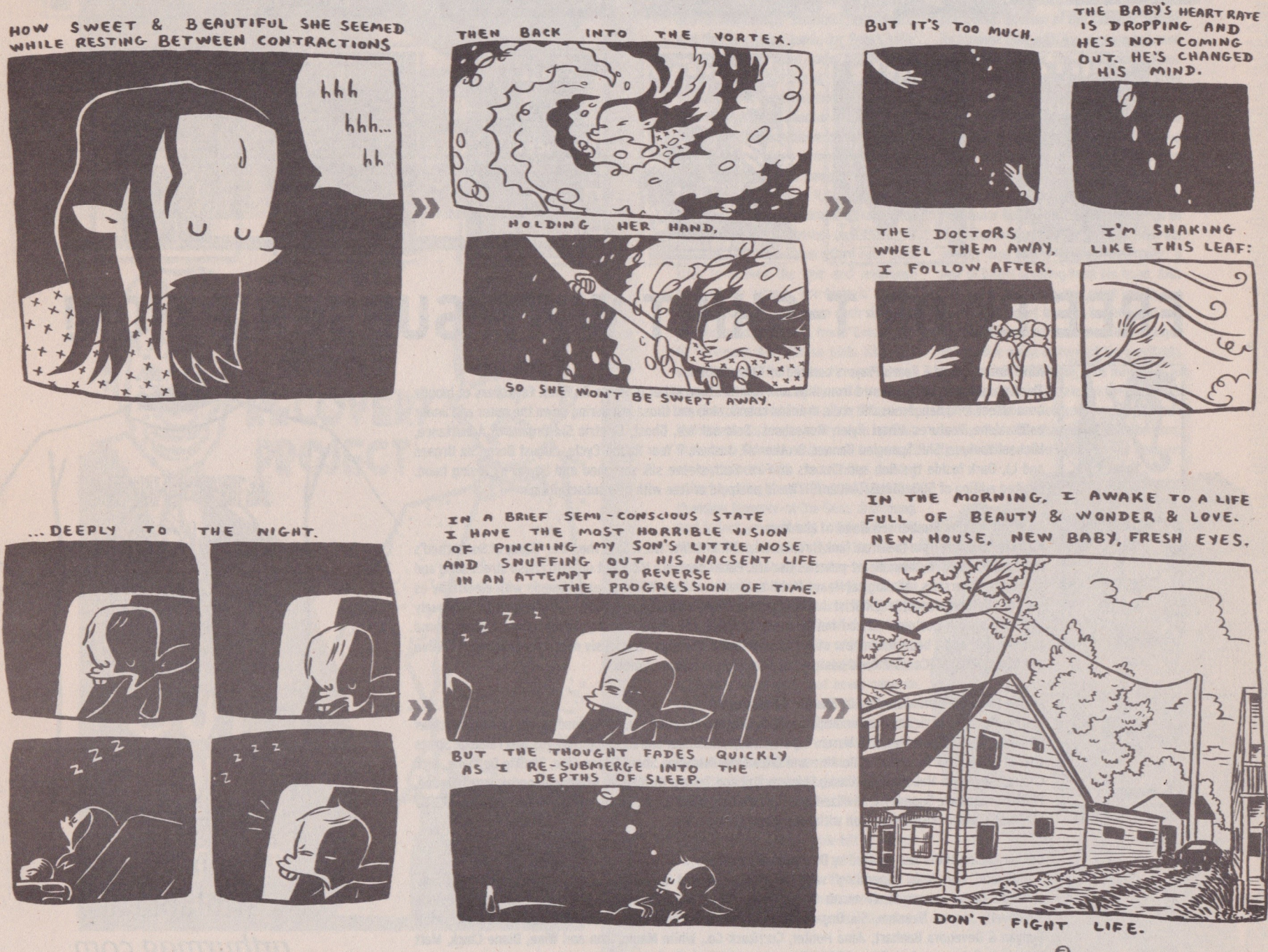
THEY CUT HER OPEN AND OUR SON IS BORN.

TWITCHING WITH LIFE

INTO MY QUAKING ARMS

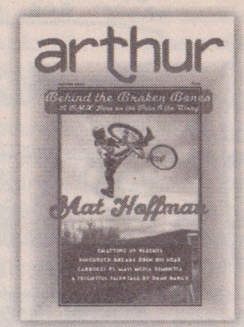

LIFE CAN KNOCK YOU AROUND...
... BUT ITS EXHILARATING.
DON'T FIGHT LIFE!
AMY WAS IN LABOR FOR ABOUT 20 HOURS. IT WAS A HEROIC STRUGGLE.
FIGHTING WITH ALL HER MIGHT TO HELP THAT BABY BOY BE BORN.
THEY CUT HER OPEN AND OUR SON IS BORN.
ELI RAY KOCHALKA
TWITCHING WITH LIFE
INTO MY QUAKING ARMS
INTO THE BRIGHT LIGHTS
INTO OUR WORLD.
I can't believe it!
He's amazing
WE ALL SUCCUMB, EXHAUSTED,


THEN WE MADE THAT BABY REAL. SOMETHING YOU MUST KNOW: THE TRANSFORMATION FROM IDEA TO PHYSICAL PRESENCE IS A WRENCHING ONE.
KACK
I've changed my mind.
THERE'S A LOT OF JOY IN THE EXPERIENCE, TOO.
CHOOSING NAMES:
How about "Iggy Awesome." OR "Squirrel"?
How about "RAY"
SWIMMING:
Your tummy floats!
WATCHING THE BABY KICK:
Woah!
TRYING OUT NEW SEXUAL POSITIONS
Oh!
Ow!
WE HAD SO MUCH JUNK, SO MANY BOXES OF BOOKS, HOW COULD WE MAKE ROOM FOR A BABY IN THIS LITTLE APARTMENT?
SO WE DECIDED TO BUY A HOUSE.
Sign here and here and here
and here and here
and here & here & here
HOW SWEET & BEAUTIFUL SHE SEEMED WHILE RESTING BETWEEN CONTRACTIONS
hhh
hhh...
hh
THEN BACK INTO THE VORTEX.
HOLDING HER HAND,
SO SHE WON'T BE SWEPT AWAY.
BUT IT'S TOO MUCH.
THE BABY'S HEART RATE IS DROPPING AND HE'S NOT COMING OUT. HE'S CHANGED HIS MIND.
THE DOCTORS WHEEL THEM AWAY. I FOLLOW AFTER.
I'M SHAKING LIKE THIS LEAF:
...DEEPLY TO THE NIGHT.
IN A BRIEF SEMI-CONSCIOUS STATE I HAVE THE MOST HORRIBLE VISION
IN THE MORNING, I AWAKE TO A LIFE FULL OF BEAUTY & WONDER & LOVE.

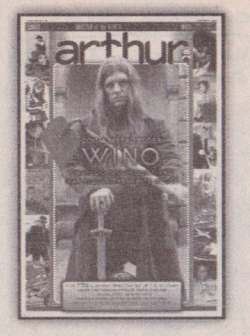

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I'M SHAKING LIKE THIS LEAF:
...DEEPLY TO THE NIGHT.
IN A BRIEF SEMI-CONSCIOUS STATE I HAVE THE MOST HORRIBLE VISION OF PINCHING MY SON'S LITTLE NOSE AND SNUFFING OUT HIS NACSENT LIFE IN AN ATTEMPT TO REVERSE THE PROGRESSION OF TIME.
BUT THE THOUGHT FADES QUICKLY AS I RE-SUBMERGE INTO THE DEPTHS OF SLEEP.
IN THE MORNING, I AWAKE TO A LIFE FULL OF BEAUTY & WONDER & LOVE. NEW HOUSE, NEW BABY, FRESH EYES.
DON'T FIGHT LIFE.

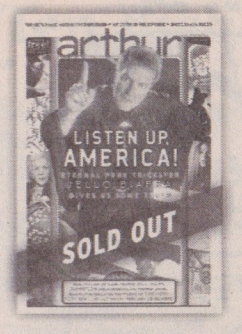
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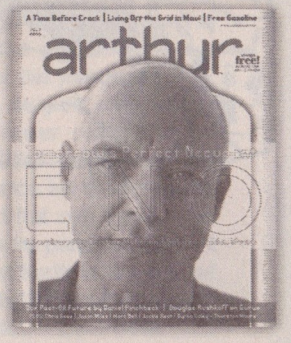


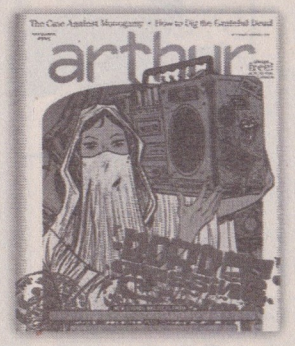


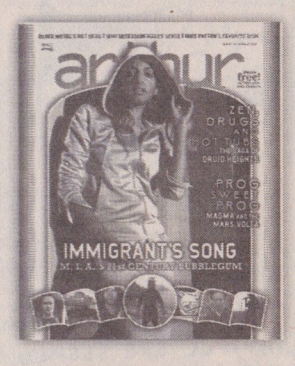


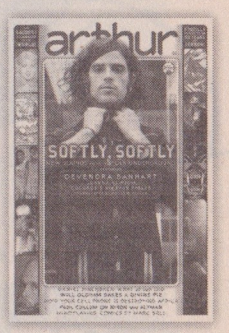


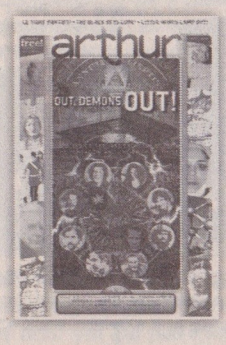




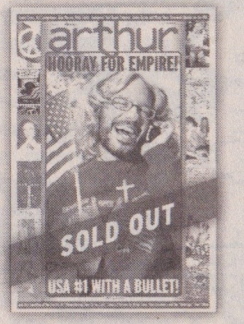




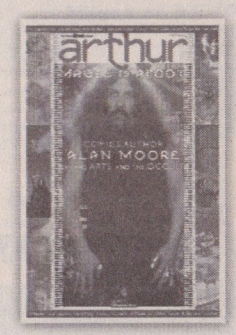










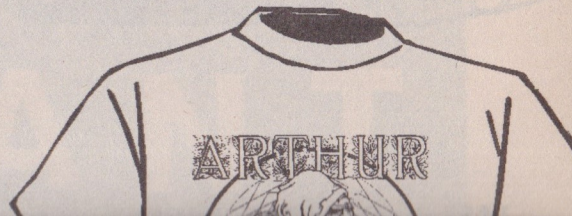




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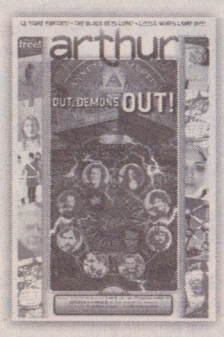


NEW! *Bread, Beard & Bear's Prayers* curated by **Ethan Miller**
Thirteen gnarly tunes gathered from high and low by Ethan Miller (Comets On Fire). For lovers of bloody nose street folk, dangerous shit rock, drunken cosmic slop and those wandering down the outer and under paths alone. Features Albert Ayler, Monoshock, Colossal Yes, Ghost, Electric Six Organs of Admittance, Michael Yonkers, Shit Spangled Banner, Brother JT, Joshua, 7 Year Rabbit Cycle, August Born (Six Organs and L), Dark Inside the Sun and Comets on Fire. Each sleeve silk-screened and bound by loving hand. Limited edition of 500. $12US/$14Can/$17World postpaid or free with new subscription.



No Magic Man by **Sunburned Hand of the Man**

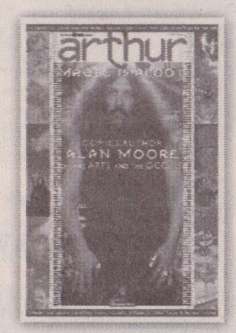














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No Magic Man by **Sunburned Hand of the Man**
New studio album from the ritual funk throb mob spotlit in *Arthur* No. 7. Says *The Wire*: "Some of Sunburned's most punishingly rhythmic heart-punches to date. Pete Cosey-era Miles cut up with Lhasa street song and stand-up stonerskits...the logical Heavy Metal extension of Tony Williams' experiments with electricity as part of Lifetime alongside guitarist John McLaughlin and organist Larry Young... Possessed of a uniquely squelchy analog bottom end and between tracks there are some wowing cut-ups from various found sources that add a beautiful veneer of mystic shit to the already precariously dosed proceedings." Edition of 1,000. $12US/$14Can/$17World postpaid or free with new subscription.



Million Tongues Festival curated by **Plastic Crimewave**
The creator of *Galactic Zoo Dossier* drops a built-to-blast compilation of underground psych. Features Michael (Yonkers) and the Mumbles, LSD March, Espers, Josephine Foster and the Supposed, P.G. Six, Fursaxa, Spires That in the Sunset Rise, Matt Valentine and Erika Elder Medicine Show, Simon Finn, Frankie Delmane, Nick Castro, Kawabata Makoto with Kinski, Shimura Koji and Takuya Nishimura, Nisennenmondai, Inner Throne, Plastic Crimewave Sound, The Civilized Age, Taurpis Tula, M.V. Carbon, Jutok Kaneko and Panicsville. $12US/$14Can/$17World postpaid or free with new subscription.



Golden Apples of the Sun curated by **Devendra Banhart**
"Landmark" says *Mojo*. "Sparkling" says *The Wire*. "A perfect introduction to the new generation of folk-oriented singer-songwriters" muses Other Music. "8.6" snorts *Pitchfork*. Featuring Vetiver (with Hope Sandoval), Joanna Newsom, Six Organs of Admittance, Viking Moses, Josephine Foster, Espers, Vashti Bunyan & Devendra Banhart, Jana Hunter, Currituck Co., White Magic, Iron and Wine, Diane Cluck, Matt Valentine, Entrance, Jack Rose, Little Wings, Scout Niblett, Troll, CocoRosie and Antony. All artwork and lettering by Devendra hisself. $12US/$14Can/$17World postpaid or free with new subscription.

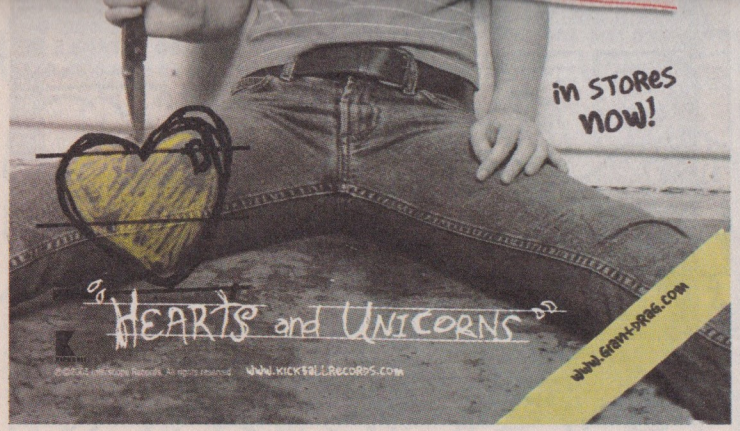


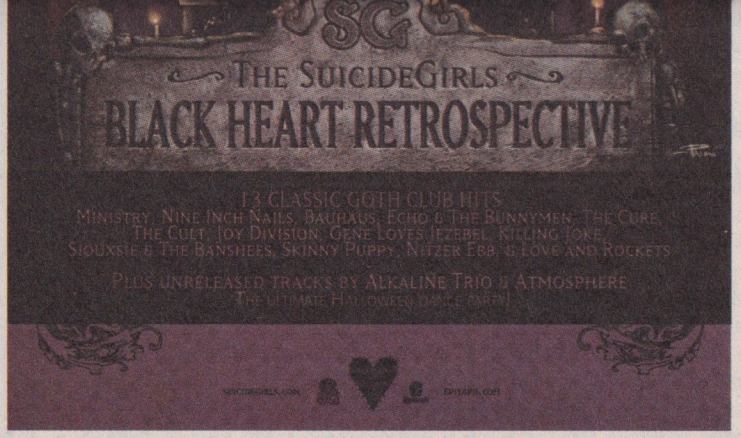
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A LAST CRY FOR HELP 2




MINE ARE ROUNDER BUT YOURS ARE KINDA CUTER
THE GIRLS YOU LIKE ARE NOT DREAMING ABOUT NASA
I HOPE BUTCH ASKS ME TO THE PROM
HE'S SO IVY LEAGUE!
WANNA GO TO THE DRIVE-IN ON SATURDAY?
SURE, BUT ONLY UNDER ONE CONDITION
WOULD YOU TAKE CARE OF THAT GEEK WHO STARES AT MY CHEST IN SCIENCE CLASS?
GRR
HEY FAG, I DON'T LIKE THE WAY YOU LOOK!
SLAM
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A LI'L DIRTBAG
SPIT
OOF
THEY'RE SPRAYING THEIR HAIR & FIXING THEIR SKIRTS
GIMME YOUR CREEPY SWORD AND SORCERY MAG
NO!
CONAN SAGA
TEAR!
FRAZETTA ILLUSTRATED
YOU JERK! THAT WAS A COLLECTOR'S ITEM!
WHAT A GEEK!
FANTASY IS NEVER ENOUGH

New from Akashic's Little House on the Bowery series, edited by Dennis Cooper:

WIDE EYED

by Trinie Dalton



"...Dalton's unique blend of dream and bracingly honest observation makes this a delightfully weird and disarming read."

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"Trinie Dalton's voice is so charming in these stories and they fly right by so it takes a little time to realize how deftly she is talking about death and sex and fear and love and slumber parties..."

—Aimee Bender

"These charming stories vibrate with innocence and awe. Trinie Dalton is an effortless purveyor of wonder, strangeness, and love. She is a writer of high spirits and unguarded vision, and this debut collection is a pleasure to read."

—Ben Marcus

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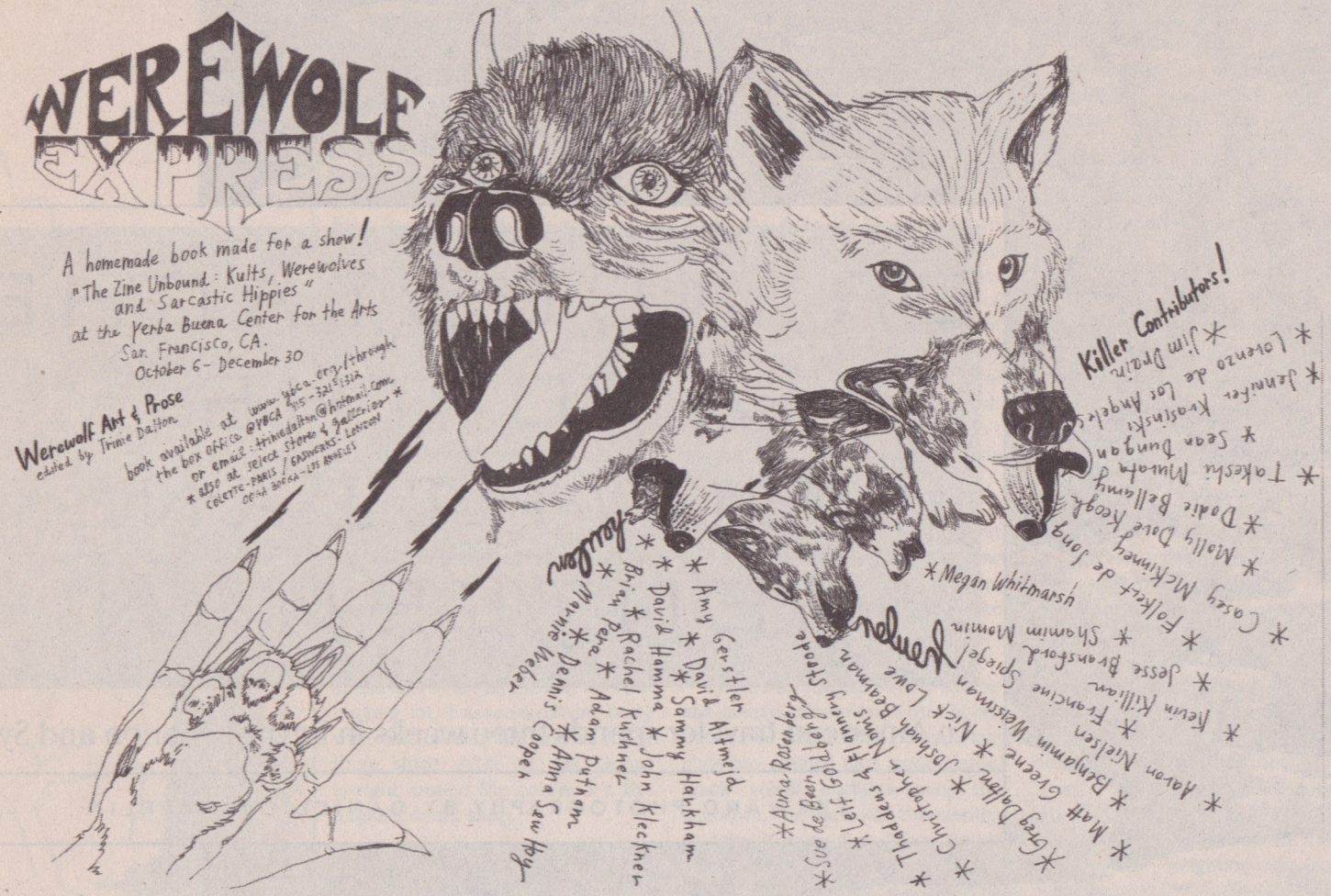
–Aimee Bender

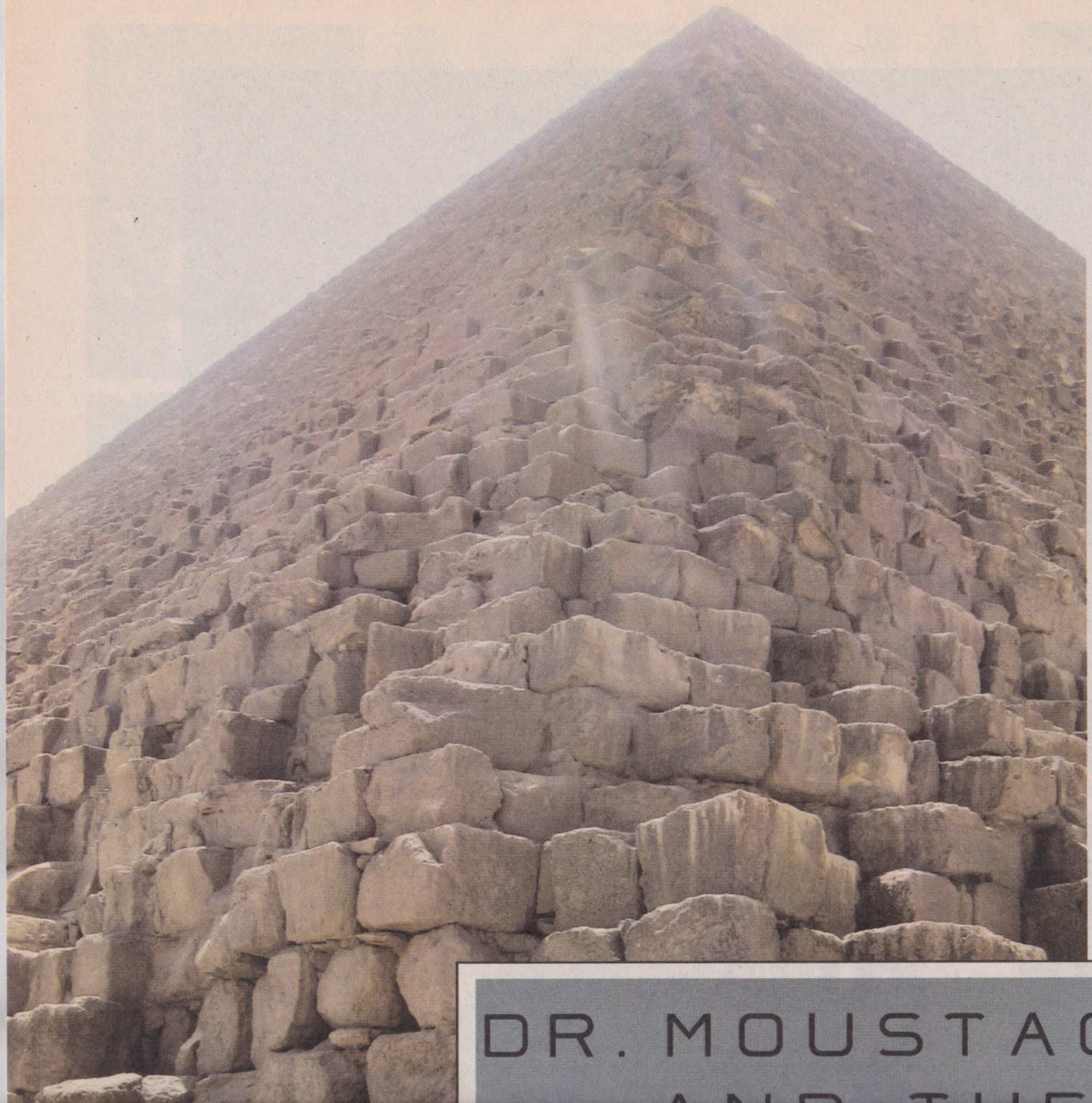
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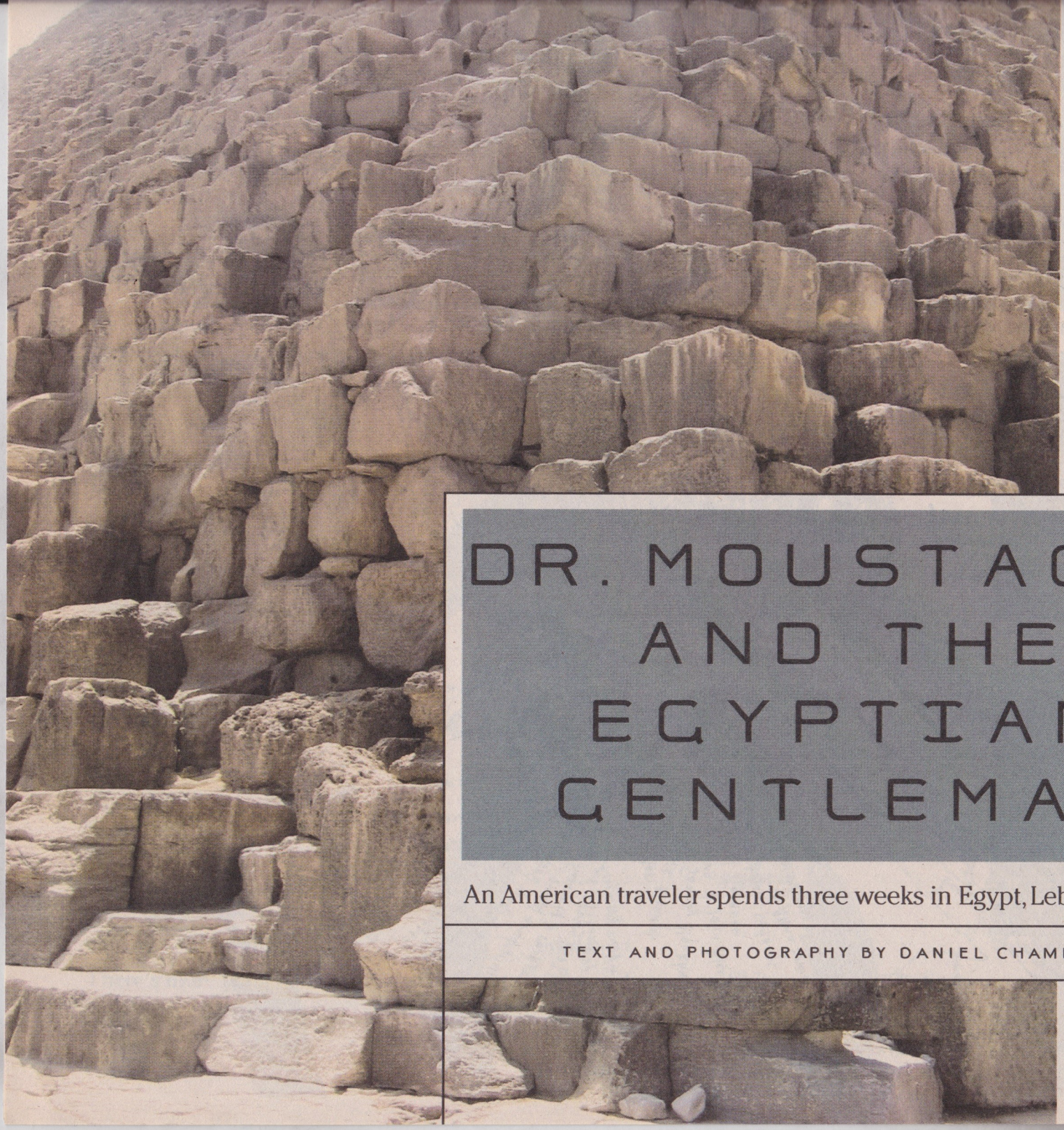
LITTLE HOUSE ON THE BOWERY





Great Pyramid of Cheops. Giza, Egypt.

DR. MOUSTACHE



DR. MOUSTACHE AND THE EGYPTIAN GENTLEMAN

An American traveler spends three weeks in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL CHAMBERLIN

It was on my second night in Egypt—a night of shotgun blasts and little girls throwing explosives at me—that I realized traveling in the Arab world was not going to be as dangerous as I had led myself to believe. My reasons for

spending the summer studying Arabic at the American University in Cairo (AUC). He invited me to join him on a three-week jaunt through Egypt, Lebanon and Syria once his classes were over in late July. As a graduate student studying the history of political dissidence in Arab countries, Paul would make for an ideal travel companion.

I had little interest in visiting any of these countries, and it wasn't exactly the safest time for Middle Eastern travel. In April, veiled women sprayed a tourist bus outside Cairo's Cities of the Dead with machine gun fire. Just around the corner, a suicide bomber killed three people in Cairo's Khan El Khalidi marketplace. The State Department maintains an advisory against travel in Lebanon, due in part to the car bomb assassination of prime minster Rafik Hariri in February. Syria, which was suspected of involvement in his killing, was hosting gun battles between police and Islamist insurgents in the suburbs of Damascus and contending with escalating tensions with the US. But the air of peril that comes with traveling under conditions better suited to a Graham Greene novel had its own romantic appeal.

The day I purchased my ticket, the Egyptian envoy to Iraq was assassinated in Baghdad and suicide bombings killed 52 people in London. Two days before my planned departure, there were bombings in a Red Sea resort town that killed 64 people. My parents called and asked me to cancel my trip. They called my brother and asked him to come home. My dad offered to buy my ticket from me, saying that our travel plans were not the plans of rational people. I tried to reassure him by recounting

PART I: EGYPT

I gaze out the window throughout the Air France flight from Paris to Cairo, eager for my first glimpse of the African coastline. From 30,000 feet in the air, Cairo looks like a dusty brown rock garden.

The sun is setting as we touch down on the runway that cuts through the cracked dirt fields surrounding Cairo International Airport. As I gather up my bags, I think about the charred corpses being pulled from the blasted hotel facades in Sharm El-Sheikh and the machine-gun-blazing women and my stomach turns over. As I step off the Air France plane I am leaving the West behind. French flight attendants are my last connection to the European-American culture that I have lived in for 30 years.

A few minutes of standing in line to talk to the English-speaking passport control personnel is an explicit reminder that I'm not de-plane-ing into a Bedouin encampment, but a modern city with an economy based in providing services to eight million tourists a year. There are plenty of Westerners in the crowds of people making their way into the country. They are easily given away by their shorts. Most everything I read prior to departure warned against shorts: some of the more alarmist writing suggested immediate kidnap by jihadi fashion enforcers. The more realistic assessment just said that, to the locals, you'd look like you were walking around in your underpants. I am rocking fresh travel gear riddled with secret zippered pockets to keep passports and cash hidden from Al Qaeda pickpockets.

Paul spots me easily. He warned me in advance that being a six-foot-tall white guy with shoulder-length hair would make me stick out like a sore thumb. Though he's got close-

floors the taxi out of the parking lot as I grab the hand-rest. Paul laughs and the driver—ignoring the outbound traffic lanes—goes flying around the oncoming traffic in the incoming lane as we pop onto the freeway.

A sea of automobiles, mostly '70s-era Fiats and Peugots, all coughing out clouds of diesel smoke and white natural gas fumes. No headlights, though it's 9 p.m. at night. No lane markers, and the drivers—none of whom would be caught dead wearing a seatbelt—make little attempt at maintaining the single-file processional-style driving common to most of the United States and Europe. When an opening presents itself, the gas is stepped on and the car jumps forward until another vehicle—automobile, troop transport truck, horse and carriage, moped—obstructs its path. This is when the headlights come on, to be flashed in tandem with some horn-honking until the way is clear and the gas pedal can again be floored. Lurching and braking we fly by huge murals depicting flights of Egyptian aircraft and battalions of tanks smashing over the Sinai in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. We narrowly miss hitting a moped upon which a family of four is riding comfortably. The mural switches from contemporary military victories to images of the pharaohs battling Nubian armies. The driver flashes his lights and lays on the horn as he abruptly swerves so as to not rear-end a donkey. A giant stone pharaoh sits on a grassy freeway median, towering over a scattering of families enjoying late night picnics. Traffic only slows when armed police are in the streets, but only so much that the drivers don't run them down. The intersections without armed guards bring to mind a classic

It was on my second night in Egypt—a night of shotgun blasts and little girls throwing explosives at me—that I realized traveling in the Arab world was not going to be as dangerous as I had led myself to believe. My reasons for going to the Middle East were fairly simple: I was weary of hot and crowded Los Angeles. I was spending too many afternoons drawing correlations between my life and the characters of *Six Feet Under*. Then, a week before my 30th birthday, my car was stolen while it was full of precious book notes, my private journals and all the financial records on my laptop computer. I was now paranoid about identity theft in addition to being lonely, depressed and alienated. As the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz put it in *The Journey of Ibn Fattouma,* "The eternal desire for travel ripened in the flame of continued pain."

My younger brother Paul was an advisory against travel in Lebanon, due in part to the car bomb assassination of prime minster Rafik Hariri in February. Syria, which was suspected of involvement in his killing, was hosting gun battles between police and Islamist insurgents in the suburbs of Damascus and contending with escalating tensions with the US. But the air of peril that comes with traveling under conditions better suited to a Graham Greene novel had its own romantic appeal.

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that I have lived in for 30 years.

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Paul spots me easily. He warned me in advance that being a six-foot-tall white guy with shoulder-length hair would make me stick out like a sore thumb. Though he's got close-cropped hair, his own pale skin shines Caucasiod in the arrivals lounge. He holds up his thumb and says "ouch." We embrace and administer manly backslaps.

"You want a cigarette," he says, as we walk through the parking lot.

"Nope, quit."

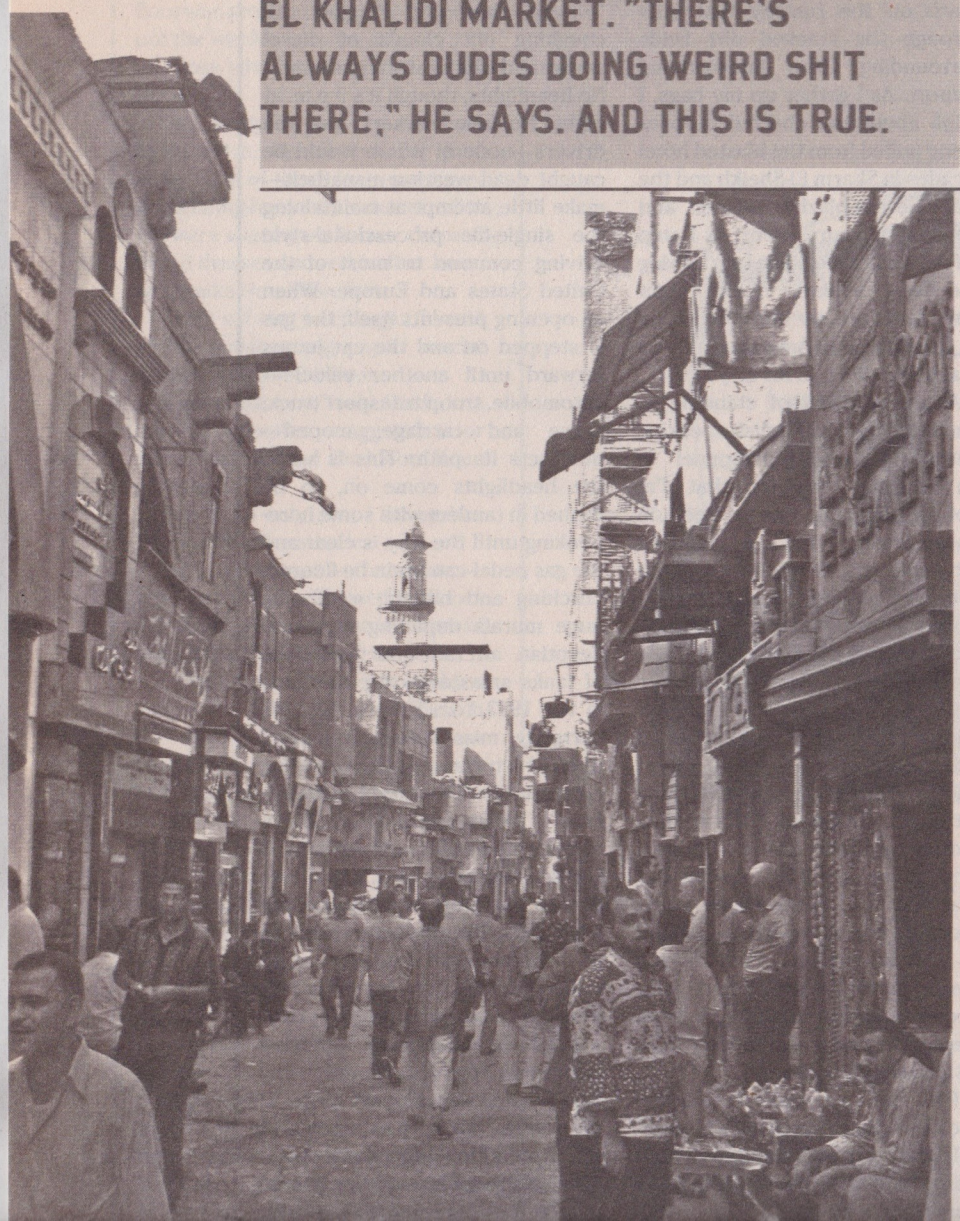
"You have to smoke or they'll think you're a tourist," he says. "Seriously, you're going to alienate a lot of people if you don't."

Our driver is maybe a taxi guy, maybe just somebody who was in the neighborhood and wanted to make some cash. He picks up a Korean couple to ride along with us. Paul and the Koreans got in the back and I get in front. "You'll like this," Paul tells me. The driver forward until another vehicle—automobile, troop transport truck, horse and carriage, moped—obstructs its path. This is when the headlights come on, to be flashed in tandem with some horn-honking until the way is clear and the gas pedal can again be floored. Lurching and braking we fly by huge murals depicting flights of Egyptian aircraft and battalions of tanks smashing over the Sinai in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. We narrowly miss hitting a moped upon which a family of four is riding comfortably. The mural switches from contemporary military victories to images of the pharaohs battling Nubian armies. The driver flashes his lights and lays on the horn as he abruptly swerves so as to not rear-end a donkey. A giant stone pharaoh sits on a grassy freeway median, towering over a scattering of families enjoying late night picnics. Traffic only slows when armed police are in the streets, but only so much that the drivers don't run them down. The intersections without armed guards bring to mind a classic American automotive experience: the figure-8 race. It's a pre-or-post NASCAR treat wherein beat-up older model cars—much like those vehicles that comprise the bulk of Cairo's traffic—race at top speeds around a figure-8 track. Intersections here are like that, except nobody's ooh-ing and ah-ing but me. That, and there's no giant beers.

We head over the bridge to the island of Zamalek, where my brother lives. The Nile shines with the lights of the high-rise apartment buildings and telecommunications towers on its banks. The island was swampy marshland before it was drained by the British and converted into



BLAKE SPENDS A LOT OF TIME WANDERING CAIRO'S LARGE KHAN EL KHALIDI MARKET. "THERE'S ALWAYS DUDES DOING WEIRD SHIT THERE," HE SAYS. AND THIS IS TRUE.



a quiet embassy district. Paul lives in an AUC student dormitory, a big brown tower in the middle of the island. AUC has been in Cairo since 1919, and as one of the most prominent places for Americans to congregate, it has a relatively high level of security. In fact, all of Cairo seems to have a high level of security, with an entire police division devoted to looking after foreigners. Despite their dashing black berets and white uniforms, they're most likely to be seen picking their noses or napping with their AK-47s balanced between their knees. The difference with AUC security is that they're quite awake and alert. Paul thinks some of them might be CIA, there to keep tabs on the next generation of diplomats, petroleum executives, military intelligence officers and foreign aid workers. AUC is the Arab equivalent of the Ivy League all rolled into one campus. It's a prohibitively expensive private institution whose students are either wealthy Arabs or the cream of American Middle Eastern Studies departments. That, and of course, the oil law students, of whom Paul and his cohort seem less than fond. The dormitory guards carefully check all bags for weapons and alcohol. Another guard sits by the elevators to the men's tower to make sure that nobody's getting laid on school property.

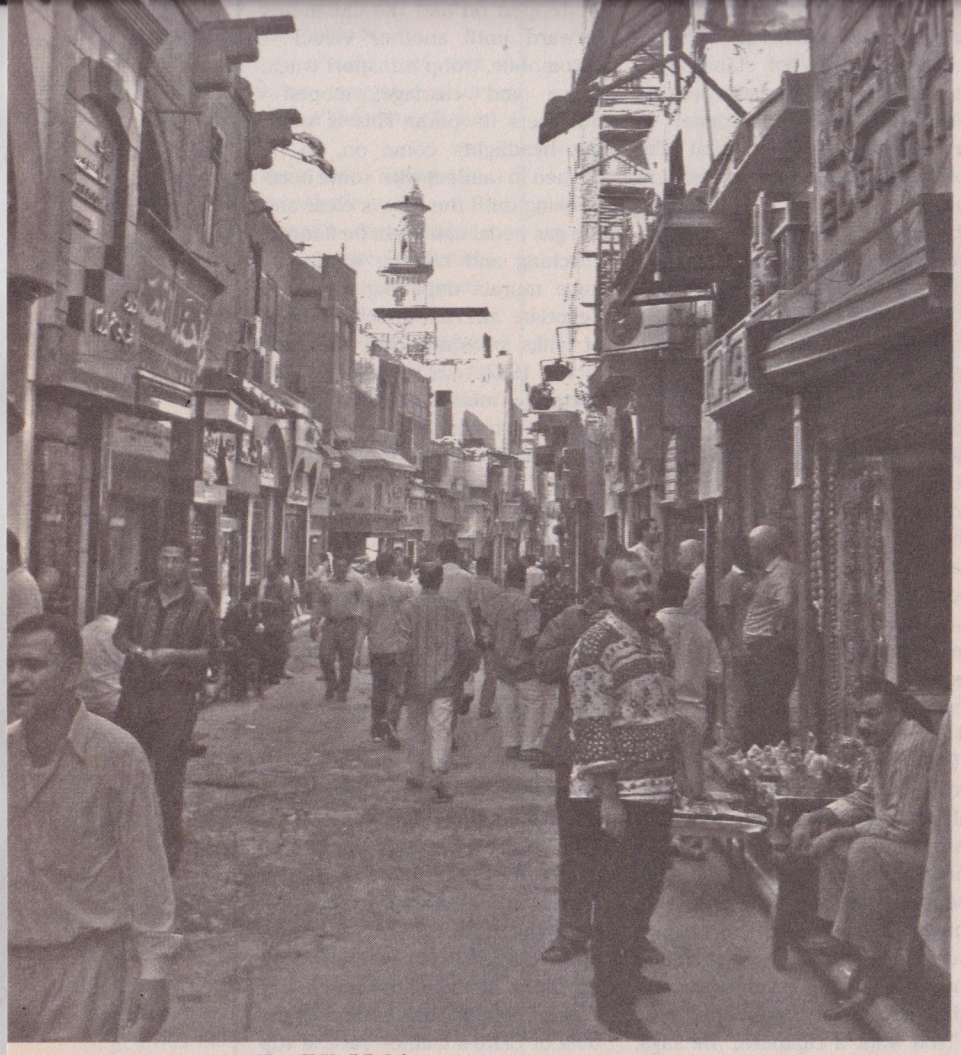
After dropping off my bags in his room, we head out for food. We order magherita pizzas, mango juice and water-pipes—sheeshas—with cantaloupe-flavored tobacco. Paul suggests I order liberal amounts of food as it's cheap, and it's unlikely that everything we order will arrive at the table. The sidewalk patio is lit with green party lights and it looks out over the Nile where kids and their fathers are fishing and old men in worn blue gibbayehs

tropical gardens that encroach on the embassies and foreign schools that sit behind stone walls and wrought-iron gates. Plenty of Arabic graffiti. One set of English graffiti reads "Mahmoud is bysexual." The heat and humidity are overwhelming and I am already glistening with sweat. Visiting the air-conditioned Egyptian Museum seems like a better plan.

The Museum of Egyptian Antiquities has 136,000 exhibits, none of which have informative displays. Egyptians need jobs and while the government helps them out with an array of subsidies it also gives the tourist-catering industries a subtle boost whenever it can. Thus most of the exhibits in the museum are not labeled at all. Hamdy, a portly guy in his 40s, asks me if I need a guide.

In the course of our tour he shows me the first recorded image of a moustache on a 4,000-year-old stone statue. "He is my great grandfather many times over," he says, pointing to his own moustache. Hamdy lives in 6 October City with his wife and two kids. He has a degree in Egyptology from Cairo University. He spent a few years working on archeological digs, but says that the directors of those expeditions paid incredibly low wages. He found he could make more money offering freelance tours of the museum.

The meal that closes my first day in Egypt is the Egyptian staple koshari. It's a carb-heavy feast of macaroni noodles, fried onions, mushrooms and rice all slopped together in a giant Styrofoam container. It comes with tiny plastic bags of clear garlic sauce and red hot sauce and it's delicious. With our nap-inducing dinners in hand, we join a group of Paul's fellow students for a felucca ride at sunset on the Nile. The felucca is



Khan El Khalidi, Cairo.

keep tabs on the next generation of diplomats, petroleum executives, military intelligence officers and foreign aid workers. AUC is the Arab equivalent of the Ivy League all rolled into one campus. It's a prohibitively expensive private institution whose students are either wealthy Arabs or the cream of American Middle Eastern Studies departments. That, and of course, the oil law students, of whom Paul and his cohort seem less than fond. The dormitory guards carefully check all bags for weapons and alcohol. Another guard sits by the elevators to the men's tower to make sure that nobody's getting laid on school property.

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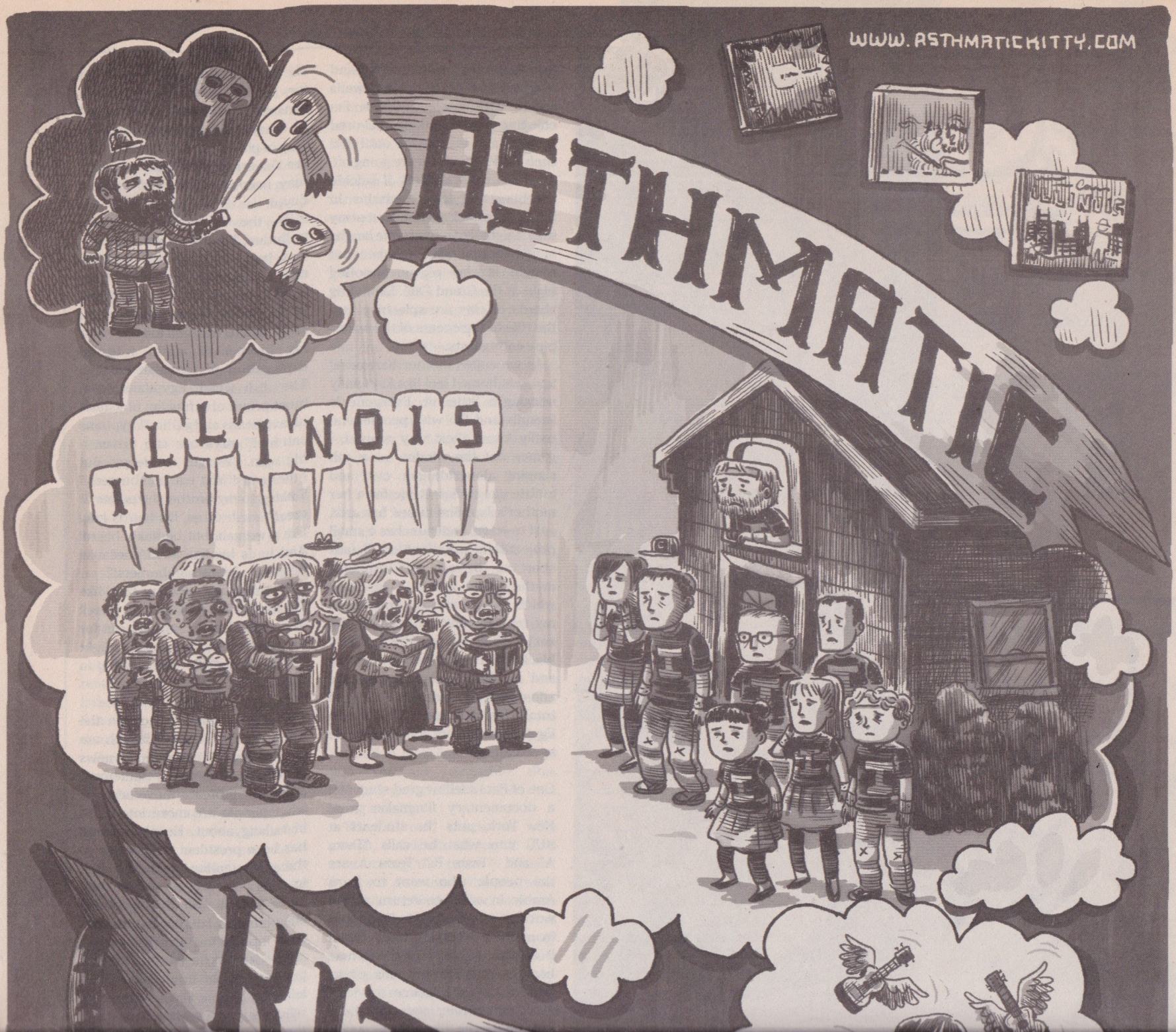
The next day I am on my own, left to navigate Cairo. My goal is to head to the Islamic quarter and the Khan El Khalidi marketplace, but I start by wandering the quiet, tree-lined streets of Zamalek. Zamalek reminds me of the crumblier edges of New Orleans' Garden District. The architecture is of the damp, decaying British and French colonial variety. There are muddy

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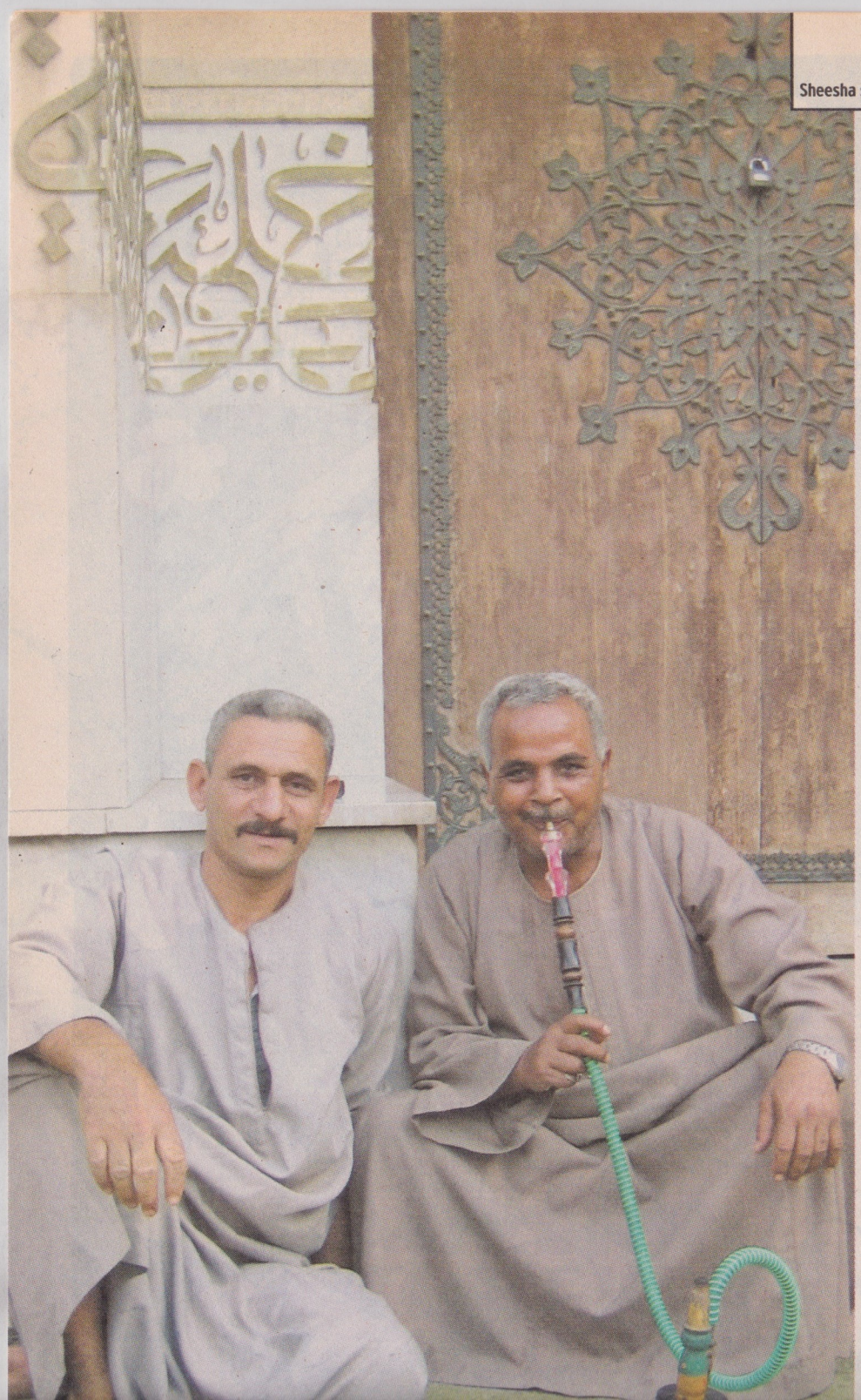
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After dinner we adjourn to the Grand Café, a swanky sheesha place in the relatively well-to-do neighborhood of Mahdi. It's a mellow scene: an open air Nile-


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Sheesha smoking tour guides in the Cities of the Dead, Cairo.

front patio with rattan tables and couches; the peach-colored walls are lit with low-level lights. I'm enjoying more cantaloupe-flavored tobacco and feeling fine until "*ka-chuk POW*!" Shotguns are going off. All those news reports of suicide bombers and lady assassins in hijabs flash back as I jump out of my seat. "Aigh!" I say. Everyone laughs at my reaction, of course, because tonight is clay pigeon shooting night at the Grand Café. Exploding shards of clay are splashing into the Nile to the cheers of the water-pipe enthusiasts.

As we enjoy another harrowing taxi ride home I feel like I'm finally relaxing a little bit. Everyone is friendly and I'm with people who really know their way around. I glance out the window at a cab running alongside our own and a little girl smiles at me from her mother's lap. She raises her arm, as if to wave, and launches a small projectile in my direction. It falls short of the cab and explodes in the street with a loud bang, which causes me to jump out of my seat and hit my head on the car's ceiling. Despite the mother's black veil, I can tell she's laughing and a little embarrassed. She admonishes her daughter who is totally lost in giggles. "Welcome in Egypt!" she hollers at me before we speed off again.

One of Paul's fellow grad students, a documentary filmmaker from New York, puts the students at AUC into what he calls "Team A" and "Team B." Team A are the people who want to learn Arabic in order to return as aid workers and diplomats interested in offering a helping hand; Team B are those who intend to come back in military uniforms or as part of the intelligence services. Paul, meanwhile, goes on about how much he likes Egypt as is, like the early stages of the fever for expatriation, the creeping sensation that living in Cairo is not so crazy. That it's the people who stay in places like Los Angeles who are the crazy ones. Paul, it seems, may become a member of Team Egypt.

By the third day of Cairo pollution, I'm not so sure. On our way back from the AUC campus near downtown, I start to have trouble breathing. The cab driver is fascinated by my appearance, and discusses it loudly with my brother. It starts with an explanation of Egyptian cuisine. The dish which Egyptians seem most proud of is fuul, an oily mess of fava beans and garlic. "Egyptians eat fuul!" says our cab driver, a big man. "We get so sleepy! But Americans! You eat hamburgers!" Talking to my brother, he points at me. "Your brother, his hair is long like a woman, but he has a beard! And he is big like a man because he eats so many hamburgers!"

My brother is laughing. I feel like I'm having the first asthma attack of my life. As my lungs cry out for a clean breath, my head gets light and I can see the dirt hanging in the air.

Though the bomb attacks in the Khan and at Sharm El-Sheikh are dominating international news coverage, the newly emergent political protest movement is what people are more interested in talking about. Hosni Mubarak has been president of Egypt since the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981. There's no doubt that Mubarak will win the upcoming elections this fall, but it's the first time opposition candidates are allowed to run. Illegal anti-Mubarak protests by an ironic alliance of left-wing groups and conservative religious parties are tolerated in



THE MAN WITH A GENTLE VOICE SMILES AND UNLOCKS THE DOOR. "I THINK THIS IS A MAMLUK TOMB, BUT I'M NOT SURE," SAYS PAUL AS WE STEP INTO THE MISTY DARKNESS, SOMEWHERE INSIDE THE CITIES OF THE DEAD.

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Blake has a vague set of

Top: Water-dispensing machine. Cities of the Dead, Egypt.
Bottom: Children playing in garbage, Cities of the Dead, Cairo.

directions, but we find no signs of gathered dissidents or the government thugs who often harass them. We're still courting danger though, as navigating downtown Cairo requires plenty of street-crossing. Pedestrians do not have the right-of-way and generally speaking, the traffic doesn't stop. This means that in order to cross the street one must summon a Zen-like confidence in the alertness of all drivers and simply step into the traffic. As the pedestrian, you rely on the driver to watch you and calculate the pace at which you're moving—Frogger-like—through the lanes of buses, trucks, bicycles, taxis and livestock moving around you. Dash too quickly and you'll throw the whole thing off as the three lanes of oncoming vehicles are all assuming you'll keep moving at a walkers pace and they'll swerve just slightly to avoid you. This sudden movement will put you in the path of a moped leaden with boxes of corn and you'll be toast. Everyone has to watch out for everyone else, all the time, or the constant flow of anarchic traffic will become gridlock. It's also useful to wait on the corner for Egyptians to cross, and follow their lead.

After a few hours of wandering past book stalls and through street markets, no protest can be found. We see a lot of bootleg DVDs and VHS of American movies, Disney cartoons, Egyptian belly-dancers and shark attacks. The books range from torrid-looking romance novels with Western women on the cover to religious books and non-descript tomes with Arabic titles. There are also copies of *Mein Kampf* and books either by or about Osama Bin Laden. Blake tries to translate one cover. "It's asking something like 'Hey, what's this guy been up to?'" he says. And *Mein Kampf*? Something about Nazi discipline, seems to jibe with der Fuhrer's anti-Semitism. Of course one could also generalize about Americans based on History Channel buffs' appetite for documentaries about the Nazis. My favorite book cover features a sketched pair of crossed legs with a line in between denoting a vague vulva-like space. These lead up to a detailed skull for a head. It reminds me of how sexless this trip is likely to be.

On the cab ride back from our failed attempt at finding the protest, the driver offers to take us to his cousin's brothel. We decline. Instead my companions talk about how Middle Eastern strip clubs are full of desperate women from the former Soviet Union.

Later that night Blake takes us to The Greek Club, a rooftop bar in the Talaat Harb or "Third War" neighborhood. The place is above a massive pastry shop in a falling-down building on a large square full of late night foot-traffic. On our way across the square two young men approach us. There are thousands of Western tourists visiting Cairo on any given day, but we're far from the resort hotels and ancient Egyptian rock piles. White people stand out, and my shoulder-length hair continues to draw stares from adults and laughter from children. Very often it's people looking to sell things, but these are just two guys who want to know where we're from. We tell them we're Americans and they're stoked, which is an increasingly common reaction. They want to know what we think of Egypt. Paul enthuses about the city and how much he likes the people here. "You see we are not all Osama," the Egyptian man says. He gives me his phone number and an open invitation to call him for assistance while we're in the country. Or if I just want to help him practice his English and drink tea.

protest movements. We're headed there with a friend of Blake's who's clearly on "Team B," a scrawny white man-child who uses words like "intel" and talks about a trip he took to one of the oases in the Western desert like it was some kind of Special Forces operation. I'm particularly disdainful of him because I recognize in his fetishization of Arab violence my own fascination for the same thing.

Our ride home features a wild-eyed taxi driver who manically dabs the sweat from his round pale face. It's not uncommon for drivers to pull out of traffic and dash into bodegas for a drink, or better yet grab a slug of water or tea from the many communal jugs and dispensers left on corners, and he does this repeatedly. While he's in the cab he holds forth with proclamations and conveys in sign language what Hosni Mubarak would do if he found out his political views—cut his throat and put out his eyes! "Aggggh!" he says, taking his hands from the wheel and clawing at his eyeballs. He'd like to drive a taxi in America eventually, but the American police would have an unpleasant reaction to his driving: They'd cut his throat and put out his eyes! "Aggggh!" he says, drawing a finger across his throat. The Egyptian police don't pose the same threat. Each time the cab slows for snarled traffic and there's a cop around he hangs his head out the window and shouts something Arabic that Blake translates as: "Hey lazy guy! Why don't you stop napping and fix this shit!" This is an opportunity for Blake to practice his favorite Arabic phrase; he follows our driver's insults by asking the cops, "Where's the party?"

Paul's classes are winding down and he's eager to get out of Egypt





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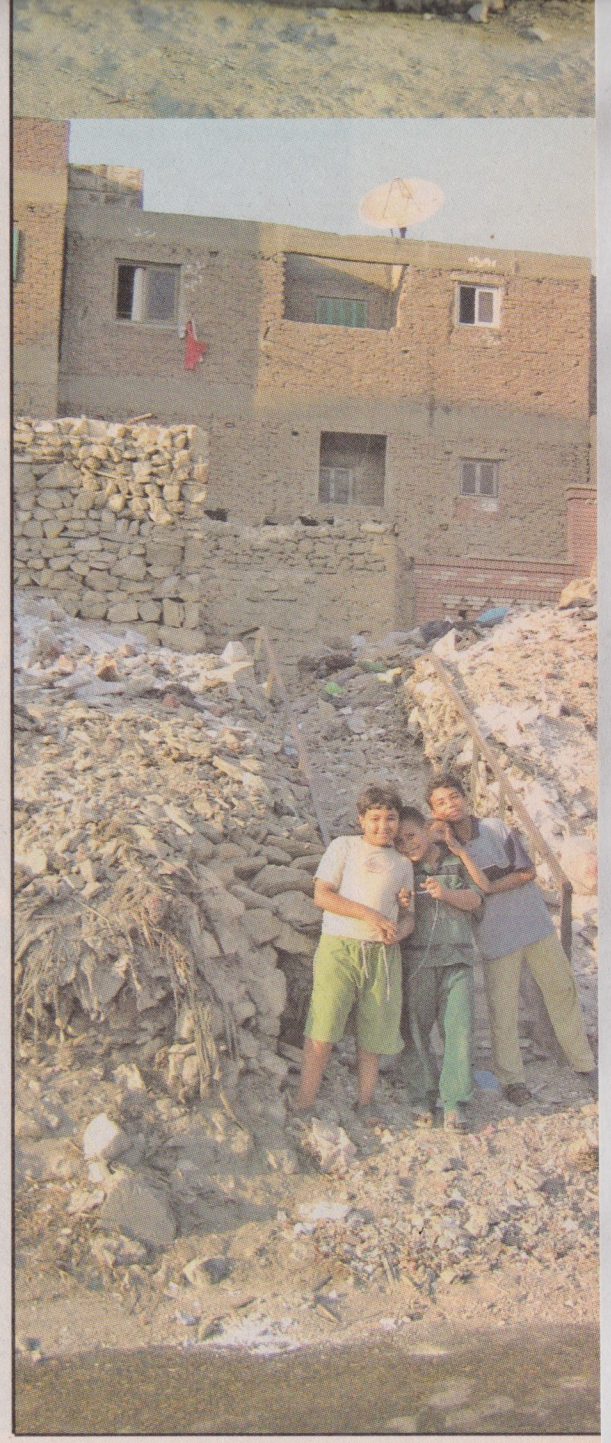
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The Greek is an established gathering place for Western expats. Lately it's also been a place where journalists mingle with members of the leftist and secular

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Paul's classes are winding down and he's eager to get out of Egypt for a little while. We have plane tickets for Beirut and one more day in Cairo before our departure for Lebanon and then Syria.

"We should definitely go to the pyramids," he says. While there are over 90 pyramids spread across Egypt's 70 kilometer-long pyramid field, the Pyramids at Giza are the largest and most accessible. The hotel-and-nightclub-strewn Cairo neighborhood of Giza runs right up to the plateau where Herodotus (450 BC), Napoleon (1798 AD) and Jerry Garcia (1978 AD) have basked in the heavy vibes that, in addition to bringing millions of dollars into the Egyptian economy, have inspired goth rock tattoos,



Egyptian Lover's old school electro jams and American currency designers.

In an effort to engage with Egypt and not just interact with its old rocks, we're happy to chat with most anyone who talks to us, which out here means the Egyptian camel guys looking for clients. Every camel, every horse and pack animal upon which a tout wishes to place us is named Michael Jackson. When Paul challenges one of the camel wranglers—"But I thought that camel over there was named Michael Jackson"—he doesn't bat an eye. "That camel is his brother," he says. "Just sit on the camel and take a picture for free!"

I join a crowd of sweaty tourists for a trip into the Pyramid of Chephren, the second tallest pyramid at Giza. It was blown open in 1818, by Giovanni Battista Belzoni, an Italian weightlifter turned amateur Egyptologist. In addition to exploding his way inside, he signed his name in giant graffiti in the burial chamber. Elsewhere in Egypt, this Hulk Hogan of temple desecrators stole a bust of Ramses II from the temple at Thebes and shipped it to England, where it is still on display at the British Museum. The Pyramid of Cheprhen is hot and crowded inside; its mystique is dispelled by the press of Western flesh all around me.

The other big draw in Giza is the Sphinx, the mysterious evil man-lion-pharoah sculpture that used to dispense riddles and now serves as the narrator for the nightly cheeseball light shows. To the east of the pyramid field there's nothing but sun-baked sand and hot wind until the Siwa Oasis and the Libyan border, but to the west sits a complex of tourist-oriented businesses; the Sphinx gaze rests upon the local two-story KFC/Pizza Hut duplex.

We get a bit off the path and end up in an off-limits area above the Sphinx. Fat British people with sunburned thighs amble around in front of it. Italian tourists in short-shorts and pink cowboy hats force their video cameras on tour guides. Two tourist police ride their camels over to us, to direct us down a long, circuitous path to the on-limits Sphinx viewing area. Paul asks them a question in Arabic. "You speak Arabic!" one of the officers says, obviously tickled. He lifts up the barbed wire. "You don't have to go all the way back around," he smiles. "You are an Egyptian gentleman and you may pass where the Egyptians pass."

We spend the afternoon in Islamic Cairo, in the large Khan El Khalidi market, an area frequented by tourists who wish to be immersed in gold, silver, spices and shabby pyramid paintings. It's also where a lot of Cairenes come to shop for food, bras, sandals and bath towels. The streets are crowded and narrow, with piles of donkey shit slowly liquidating in runoff wastewater. Guys pushing carts charge through, hissing at people to let them know that they're not slowing down. More polite are the men and boys running between coffee houses and shops with trays of Turkish coffee and tea held high to avoid the jostling crowd. Blake, Paul's friend, moved here on a whim earlier in the summer and said he spends a lot of time wandering the Khan just to get a sense of the city. "There's always dudes doing weird shit there," he says.

And this is true. We see closet-sized offices with nothing inside but a TV and a tray of coffee where exasperated looking men sit staring into space. In the jewelry district, ancient, jerry-rigged furnaces burn metal inches away from the passing crowd. In the back alleys animal carcasses hang in unrefrigerated glass cases, gathering flies. In other places men cluster together making repairs to noisy, unrecognizable engines. Homosexuality is officially illegal, but platonic man-on-man affection is found everywhere. Young boys walk by tangled up in each other's arms, while hirsute men hold hands and whisper into each other's ears.

After a few hours, we make our way over the freeway and into the Cities of the Dead.

Though their existence predates the arrival of Islam in Egypt in the early 600s, the Cities are basically Islamic cemeteries inhabited by hundreds of thousands of squatters and tomb-watchers, a funerary sprawl that spreads out southeast of Cairo until running up against the Muqattam Hills. There are several well-traveled walking tours where one can take in dozens of famous gravesites. We wander in and start poking around on our own.

The tombs house rich and poor alike, some of the crypts seem indistinguishable from houses; cinder block structures where apparently someone is buried, but also where families live and raise their children. Others look like abandoned churches or temples. A crusty-eyed puppy growls at us from underneath the blackened chassis of an ancient Fiat. Kids play in a pile of burning garbage.

Professional mourners nod at us from their perch at the front of freshly occupied chambers. Theirs is not an enviable job—they help coordinate the mourning for the bereaved or in a worst case scenario, sob and wail as stand-ins for absent relatives—but it must be convenient to live and work in the same neighborhood. It's quiet here, and though the Cities are a tourist attraction there are absolutely zero other Westerners about the place. We're a spectacle. A woman dressed in full black robes and head scarf sees us from the window of her squat and comes running out of the front door to holler "Welcome in Egypt!" It's the first time a woman has approached us since I've been in this country. We smile and I mangle toddler compliments. "Thank you! Egypt pretty!" *Shokran! Misr gamil!*

We round a corner and find an outdoor taxi garage that runs the length of several blocks. I have long wondered (well, since Tuesday) where the taxis come from, and now my questions are answered. Taxis in Egypt seem to be primarily French-made sedans from the '70s and '80s. They're all painted black and white with a taxi license number printed in Arabic numerals on the side. They're further customized with heart-shaped neon lights in the cabin and all manner of Islamic trinkets on the dashboard or hanging from the rear-view mirror. Mini-Korans seem to be the Muslim equivalent of the dashboard Jesus. By far the finest of the Egyptian taxi accessories is "musical brakes," a tricked-out brake system that plays a tinny electronic version of "It's A Small World After All" each time the brakes are applied.

We watch kids gopher, their arms blackened with grease, wielding wrenches or handfuls of nuts and bolts. A garden courtyard opens off this taxi lab with a domed tomb at its center. Lots of the mechanics have noticed us standing around gawking, and one approaches. He says a few things in Arabic that Paul doesn't understand. He gestures that we should follow him.

He takes us past a group of men

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The tombs house rich and poor alike, some of the crypts seem indistinguishable from houses; cinder block structures where apparently someone is buried, but also where families live and raise their children. Others look like abandoned churches or temples. A crusty-eyed puppy growls at us from underneath the blackened chassis of an ancient Fiat. Kids play in a pile of burning garbage.

Professional mourners nod at us from their perch at the front of freshly occupied chambers. Theirs is not an enviable job—they help coordinate the mourning for the bereaved or in a worst case scenario, sob and wail as stand-ins for absent relatives—but it must be convenient to live and work in the same neighborhood. It's

answered. Taxis in Egypt seem to be primarily French-made sedans from the '70s and '80s. They're all painted black and white with a taxi license number printed in Arabic numerals on the side. They're further customized with heart-shaped neon lights in the cabin and all manner of Islamic trinkets on the dashboard or hanging from the rear-view mirror. Mini-Korans seem to be the Muslim equivalent of the dashboard Jesus. By far the finest of the Egyptian taxi accessories is "musical brakes," a tricked-out brake system that plays a tinny electronic version of "It's A Small World After All" each time the brakes are applied.

We watch kids gopher, their arms blackened with grease, wielding wrenches or handfuls of nuts and bolts. A garden courtyard opens off this taxi lab with a domed tomb at its center. Lots of the mechanics have noticed us standing around gawking, and one approaches. He says a few things in Arabic that Paul doesn't understand. He gestures that we should follow him.

He takes us past a group of men



The Pyramids at Giza, Egypt.

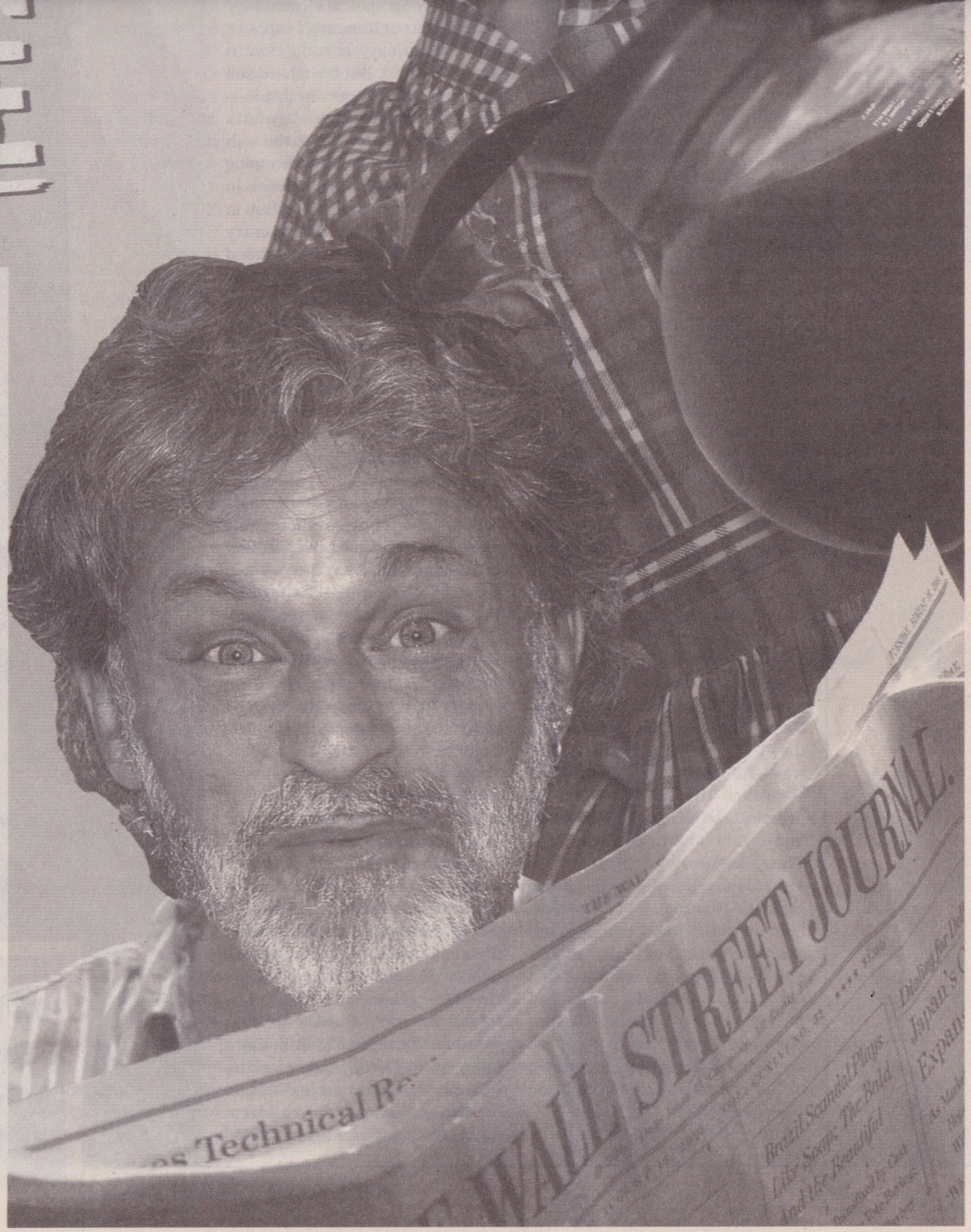
IN EGYPT, EVERY CAMEL, EVERY HORSE AND EVERY PACK ANIMAL IS NAMED MICHAEL JACKSON.

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sitting around a table and drinking tea, and delivers us to two old men sitting at the locked wooden door of the tomb.

The two men smile at us and put down their sandwiches. There's a homemade sheesha pipe in front of their picnic and the air smells of fragrant tobacco. They're both dressed in gibbayehs and the shorter man of the two talks to Paul in a gentle voice. The man smiles and unlocks the door. "I think this is a Mamluk tomb, but I'm not sure," he says as we step into the musty darkness.

His Arabic is extremely pleasant to listen to, but Paul doesn't understand much of it. His voice is too soft and his dialect unfamiliar. He thinks we're in the tomb of one of the sons of a Mamluk general. Mamluks were a class of slaves who were captured as children and raised to become warriors in the 11th Century. They eventually seized power in Egypt and occupied leadership positions both in military and civilian life until they were massacred by the Egyptian governor Mohammed Ali in 1811. Our guide shows us a framed manuscript, the entire Koran hand-written in script so tiny that it only takes up one 10 x 12 piece of parchment. There are chairs embossed with mother of pearl that he insists we take a picture of. He points us to a staircase leading down under the tomb. We have no flashlight, and decline his offer to poke around alone in the darkness. He laughs and leads us out of the building. We wind through a garden where a cat is shitting. He points us to an iron staircase leading to the top of the tomb. We ascend and survey the Cities of the Dead and the freeway that leaves a smoggy haze hanging over its domes and spires.

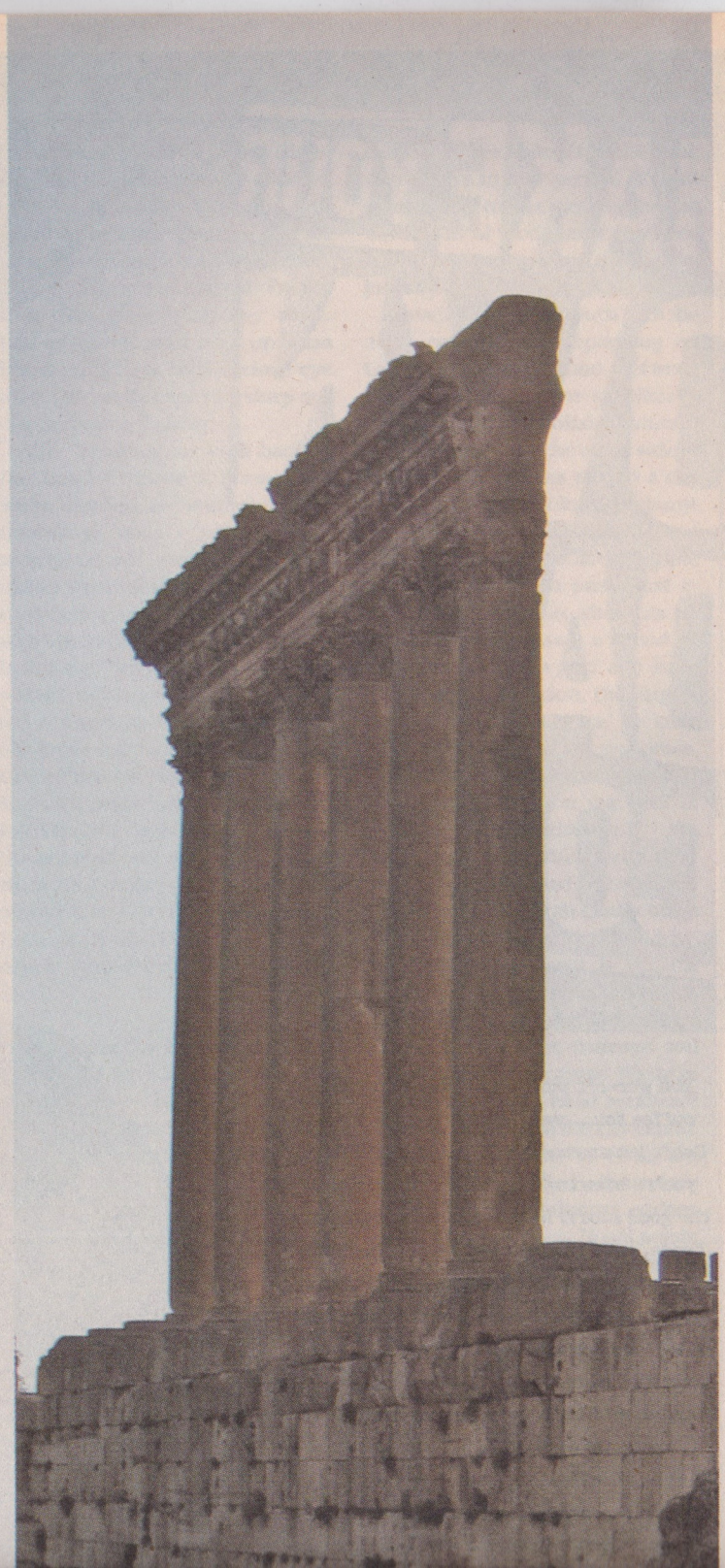
We end the day at Al Azhar Park, a newly renovated green space on

PART II: LEBANON

Arriving in Beirut is like arriving back in Europe. The airport is fresh, orderly and clean. No one is yelling. Beer is for sale in the airport concession stand. "*Haram!*" says Paul at the sight of the booze. Forbidden! Women are dressed in Western fashions and the men are hip and young and cool. It's the most dangerous place we've been so far in terms of the recent political violence, but I immediately feel comfortable and safe.

All the countries we are visiting on this trip border the Mediterranean. My dad is the one person who referred to our travels in "the Mediterranean region," which is probably the most accurate geographical terminology to describe our itinerary. I suppose Beirut is an easy introduction to the Arab world. But it's a hard sell after the Africa-meets-Arabia-in-a-haze-of-exhaust-and-donkey-farts madness of Cairo. Here, the cab driver rips us off after dropping us at our hotel. Cab drivers in Egypt ripped me off, too. But in Egypt the cab driver was a crazy old man blasting tinny dubbed Koranic readings and guzzling non-alcoholic Birell beer. He took me for a dollar, and I knew the extra money was going to buy a week's worth of fuul. In Beirut the driver is a cocky 18-year-old in designer jeans who'll use his extra five bucks to buy more hair gel and fake gold chains. Beirut and I get off to a bad start.

Beirut harshes my Orientalist fantasy by being thoroughly modern and full of wealthy vacationing Saudis. The women dress like babes in Los Angeles. The dudes with them are Euro-trash Fonzies with expensive shirts. They drive Porsches and Ferraris, asshole cars, not the vintage French clunkers favored by



Temple of Jupiter pillars at sunset.
Baalbeck, Lebanon.

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We end the day at Al Azhar Park, a newly renovated green space on the southeastern hills overlooking the city. "This is the first grass I've walked in all summer," says Paul. We watch the sunset. Flights of pigeons take off from roosts sitting on top of apartment buildings. Their keepers guide them in formation in the sky with red flag signals. Hundreds of mosques light up as the sun disappears and the muzzeins call to prayer echoes out over the city; an amplified cacophony of songs, chants and prayers from a thousand devout Cairenes. Young kids in the park are flying kites as we head down to the freeway to catch a cab ride back to Zamalek.

Tomorrow we fly to Beirut.

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Supposedly it's for this Westernness that wealthy Arabs flock to Beirut to let their hair down. Even those women who choose to keep their hair up do so in haute couture hijabs. The city has a thriving nightlife of bars and clubs. The food is amazing. But the inklings of camaraderie that I felt in Cairo are gone. In Cairo we were well-to-do Americans who needed a hand finding our way around and were happy to spend some time sharing



THE VENUS TEMPLE WAS ONCE USED FOR FANTASTICALLY DECADENT RITUALS BY PAGAN ROMANS. NOT SO MUCH HORNY PARTYING GOES DOWN IN THE HEZBOLLAH ERA.

Top: Hezbollah T-shirt stand. Baalbeck, Lebanon.
Bottom: "Room for the boss of whippers" at Khiam Prison. Southern Lebanon.





cigarettes in a cab, swapping American slang for Arabic phrases. Our haplessness with the language and culture, coupled with our openness to talking about politics or food or whatever meant there was a comfortable level of exchange going on with the locals. Here in Lebanon I feel like a scrub, a filthy traveler with sweaty clothes and an unshaved face. People scoff at Paul's Arabic and are pissed that his French isn't fluent. It's like all the trouble and strife of the Middle East rolled up with the snooty attitude of Europe.

We spend our first night in Beirut walking from dinner in the gentrified Achrafiyeh neighborhood to the Central District. During the Civil War this downtown area was bombed to rubble and occupied by PLO gunmen and rotting bodies of civilian casualties. Now it's been remodeled, retrofitted and rebuilt. We sit at the central square. The lack of explicitly foreign vibes reminds me how far away from home I really am. There are few Westerners here—there's still that worrisome State Department travel advisory—and we don't see many Africans either. There are soldiers and police in green and grey camouflage. They carry M-16s rather than AK-47s and, unlike the sleepy Egyptian teenagers that make up the ranks of Egypt's urban authorities, they look alert and on edge. It was only a few months ago and a few miles away that former prime minister Rafiq Hariri was assassinated in a car bomb attack that killed 15 pedestrians and injured 120 more.

It's the nearness of the civil war that makes Beirut faintly terrifying. In the window of the convenience store next to our hotel there's a comical "Welcome to Beirut!" poster with cartoon renderings of dead bodies in the street, RPG-toting PLO militiamen drinking

It seems this structure was favored by snipers, peppered as it is with hundreds of thousands of bullet-and-mortar holes. Our guide Kate Seelye, a friend from Los Angeles who relocated to Beirut and is now a freelance reporter and producer on PBS's *Frontline*, tells me that they used to toss people off the deck of the revolving restaurant on top.

From the handful of books written about the Lebanese Civil War, I've chosen to read Robert Fisk's 700-page *Pity The Nation*. Fisk is a war correspondent for the British *Independent* newspaper and his account reads both as a decent first draft of the historical record, but moreso as a first-person account of an outsider's perspective on the conflict. My brother thinks it's overlong and a little too personal; he recommends *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*. Any way you cut it, the civil war is long and violent, its terribly confusing chain of atrocities extends back to power-plays made by British and French colonial powers in order to shift the balance in far-distant European wars. It's depressing to see how deeply fucked up this region is as a result of so much foreign meddling. How clueless Western leaders were then with the implications of re-drawing national borders, undermining tribal loyalties and ruthlessly manipulating ethnic and religious factions. It seems that history is doomed to repeat itself until the West runs out of cash to run ill-fated, impossible-to-win wars and occupations. It also seems like people in the American government are refusing to learn from history.

The one thing that remains clear is that Israel is the enemy, and this manifests itself in strange ways: They don't even care if you have

destination is the Roman ruins at Baalbeck, the former Hezbollah headquarters. Hezbollah—The Party of God—is the primary armed Shia-Lebanese political party: formed in 1982 they drove the last Israeli forces out of South Lebanon in 2000.

We catch a mini-bus to Baalbeck in Cola, a bustling transportation hub in one of the grittier neighborhoods of Beirut. It's choked with taxis and the Russian-built mini-vans that seem to be the most common form of inter-city mass transit. We ride with a van full of furloughed soldiers through Beirut. A teenager in a white T-shirt hangs out the open sliding door barking our destination, trying to fill the vehicle before we hit the road.

The drive to Baalbek takes us through winding mountain roads. Our driver is *Welcome Back Kotter*'s Gabe Kaplan and he has has no fear about passing slower vehicles on the freeway by crossing into oncoming traffic lanes. The soldiers pass a bottle of water around and laugh as we swerve back into safety. Nobody wears seatbelts except Gabe Kaplan, who only puts his on when we pass through military checkpoints.

We switch to another mini-bus for the drive up the Bekaa Valley to Baalbek. The young man I'm sitting next to in the back asks me if I'm American. I respond in Arabic—*aiwa*—yes. "Don't speak Arabic," he tells me. He introduces himself as Jaffar.

The Bekaa is a rich agricultural area. There are people working in fields and vineyards on either side of the road. The towns that continue in an uninterrupted chain out of Beirut look as if they are comprised of food stores, auto repair shops and clothing stores constructed exclusively with cinder blocks. "All these people,"

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The one thing that remains clear is that Israel is the enemy, and this manifests itself in strange ways: They don't even care if you have tourist money—if you have an Israeli stamp on your passport, or any other sign of having visited Israel on your person, you will be denied entry into Lebanon.

Humans are vicious animals and their civic and religious leaders, when given the right circumstances, only make them more so. But it's hard to see that in the faces enjoying the holiday atmosphere of this city. To see this up close, we'll have to leave its limits.

We leave in the morning for the Bekaaa Valley, the last place Syrian troops were stationed prior to withdrawing earlier this year. Our

hit the road.

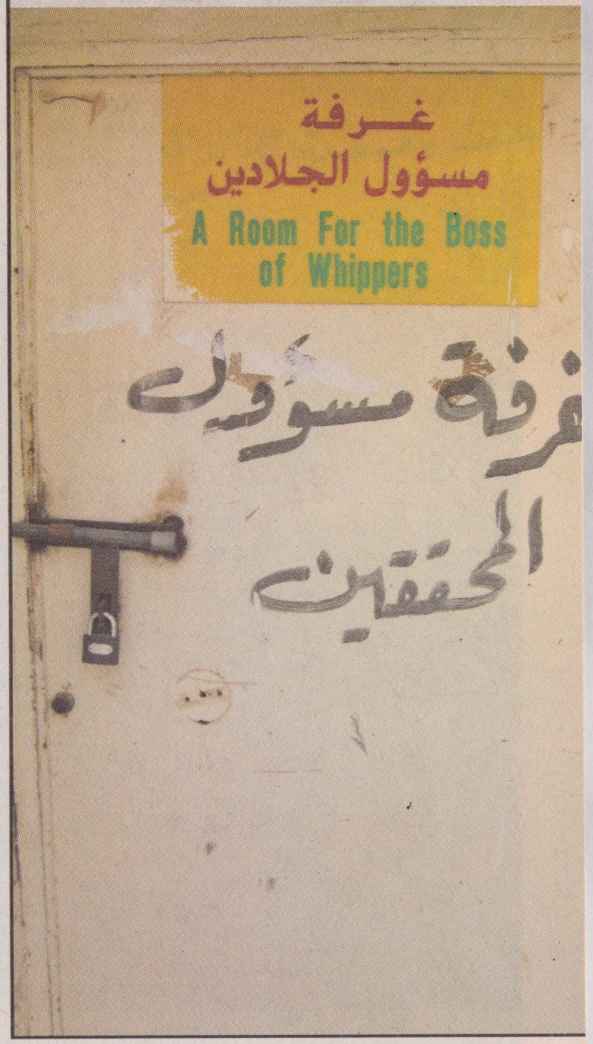
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The Bekaa is a rich agricultural area. There are people working in fields and vineyards on either side of the road. The towns that continue in an uninterrupted chain out of Beirut look as if they are comprised of food stores, auto repair shops and clothing stores constructed exclusively with cinder blocks. "All these people," says Jaffar, "make their money from drugs." The Bekaa is famous for its cannabis production. According to Fisk's *Pity The Nation*, during the war the Syrian Army protected marijuana fields, the revenue from which was allegedly channeled through Damascus. Fisk tells the story of one farmer who installed an anti-aircraft gun next to his crops.

"My girlfriend in Beirut does a lot of drugs," Jaffar says, giving me a weird look. "She's an American too." I don't know if he's dropping hints here, but I don't feel like making drug deals in Hezbollah country. Jaffar is a little creepy, so I'm happy when our conversation





turns to his relatives in Detroit. As he's getting ready to disembark he gives me his mobile number. "If you need anything in Baalbek, give me a call."

The closer we get to Baalbek, the more posters of Shiite leaders—from the ecstatically beneficent visage of Hezbollah's Sheikh Nasrallah to the reserved faces of various Iranian ayatollahs—line the streets. Baalbek is a quaint town with Hezbollah graphics everywhere. In addition to being an armed militia, Hezbollah is also a legitimate political party. They're also in charge of the electricity ministry.

The temple ruins here have been a draw for tourists and pilgrims since the first millennium BC. Most of them date from the Roman era and include a set of huge columns that change color from brown to pink in the setting sun. There's a nearly intact Venus Temple that dates from AD 150 and is allegedly one of the most ornate temples in all of Roman antiquity. The walls are rosy brown and covered in intricate carvings as well as graffiti dating from the 1800s to the present. The entire complex was used for of all sorts of fantastically decadent rituals in tribute to the pagan god Baal's consort Astarte. The temple orgies continued once the site was transferred over to the Roman goddess Venus. Of course, not so much horny partying goes down in the Hezbollah era. I'm late to the party by about a thousand years.

Hezbollah's Museum of Lebanese Resistance is in the parking lot out front. Paul and I dip inside to check out diorama displays of blood-soaked Israeli and American flags and cases full of weapons and other military equipment stripped from the bodies of Israeli soldiers. As we cruise through the Hall of Martyrs, my first bout of dysentery—which I'd been holding off since this morning with a drug cocktail of Immodium, Pepto-Bismol and the napalm of anti-diarrhea medicines, Cipro—begins to manifest itself. The drugs are wearing off as I view the diaries and personal effects of Hezbollah suicide bombers and machine gun attackers. A video of bomb attacks plays in the corner. The museum's curator watches us closely, his attention aroused by my uncontrollable belching. Paul is trying to keep a straight face as I beeline for the door and dash back to our hotel.

My condition, kept under control by fresh drugs, gets more tenuous when we realize there's no late-night dinner to be had. So we subsist on beer and nuts at the Palmyra Hotel, a huge World War I-era stone building that has hosted military officers, archeologists and celebrities. The laidback proprietor shows us rooms where Nina Simone, Placido Domingo and the legendary Lebanese singer Fairouz have slept.

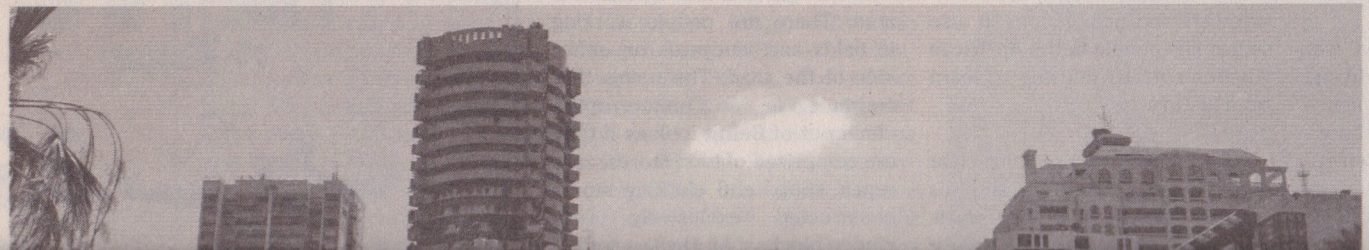
In the morning we eat delicious syrupy sweet-cheese-filled sesame buns from a pastry shop where it looks like everyone in Baalbek goes for breakfast. The shop falls silent as we enter. I realize that we haven't seen any other Westerners except for a handful of French tour bus people at the ruins. Conversations start back up again but the regulars keep a close eye on us. We smile back and slurp our cheese appreciatively.

After breakfast we walk back to the hotel to make a phone call. We're headed to South Lebanon tomorrow and I need Kate's assistance with getting the proper military permission. The owner of the hotel was quite gregarious the night before, but this morning he is fuming. The army has parked a water truck in front of his sign and is refusing to move it. This will hurt his business, he says, and no we cannot use his phone. He's on the line with Hezbollah, asking them to join him in a declaration of war on the army, or perhaps just move this truck. In addition to coordinating martyrdom operations in South Lebanon, Hezbollah is also a social organization not unlike the Kiwanis Club.

Blake is due to fly in from Cairo today, and we meet up with him at the gates of the American University in Beirut after returning from Baalbek. The AUB campus, like every other place we've been in both Egypt and Lebanon, is crawling with cats. Apparently the prophet Mohammed was fond of cats and these animals, while feral, don't seem to fear people. It's not uncommon to see people leaving out dishes of food, and I don't see a single mouse or rat during my journey.

Traveling to the south can be a bit complicated depending on the level of escalation between the Lebanese— more specifically Palestinian or Hezbollah fighters—and the Israelis on the other side of the border. Kate has placed a call on our behalf to a colonel in charge of some southern checkpoints, and it seems we're on the list of people who are allowed to pass. Just in case there's trouble, she puts us in touch with Hosni, a friend of hers who drives a taxi and hails from outside of Sidon, the largest city in South Lebanon. In case the checkpoints turn us down, he knows enough back roads and can likely take us on our tour of "Liberated South Lebanon."

The drive to Baalbek was a grim trek through denuded hillsides and mile after mile of drab cinder-block construction projects. The drive south along the coast is tropical and mellow. There are banana fields and vistas of the Mediterranean; there are also tank convoys and Palestinian refugee camps. We drive through Sidon and head southeast at the roundabout in the city center. During the invasion of 1982, the Israeli forces killed thousands of civilians in retaliatory strikes against PLO positions. Hosni points out the neighborhood where he



View of the Hamra neighborhood. Beirut, Lebanon.

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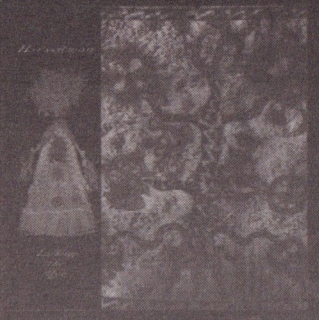
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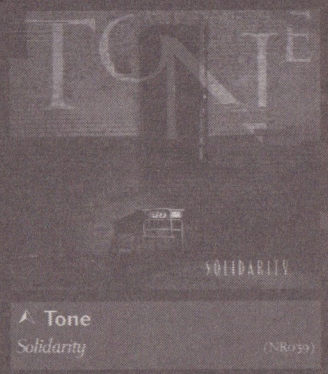
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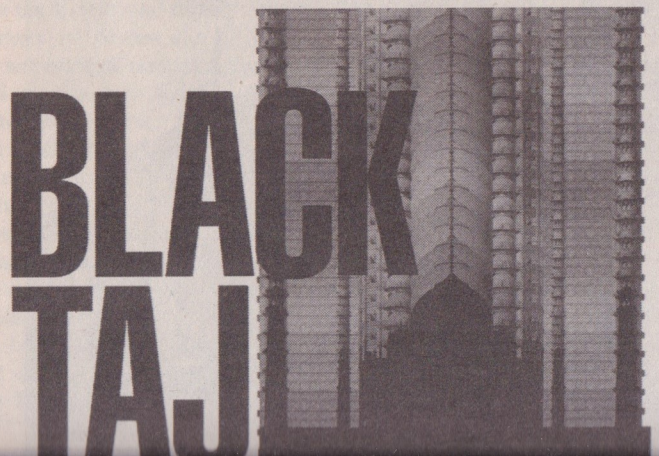


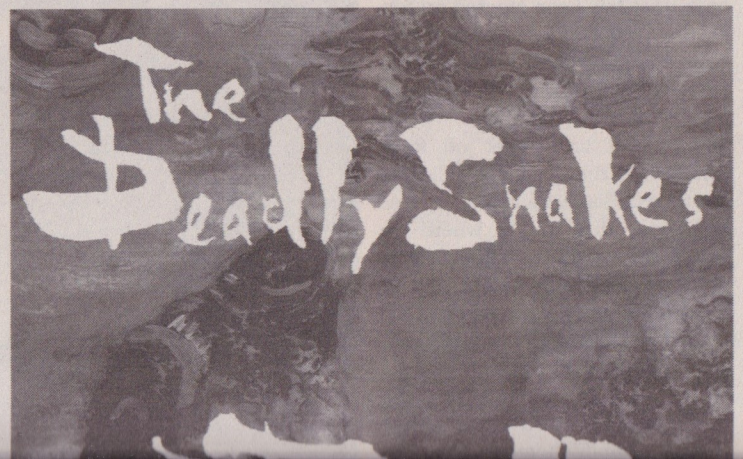
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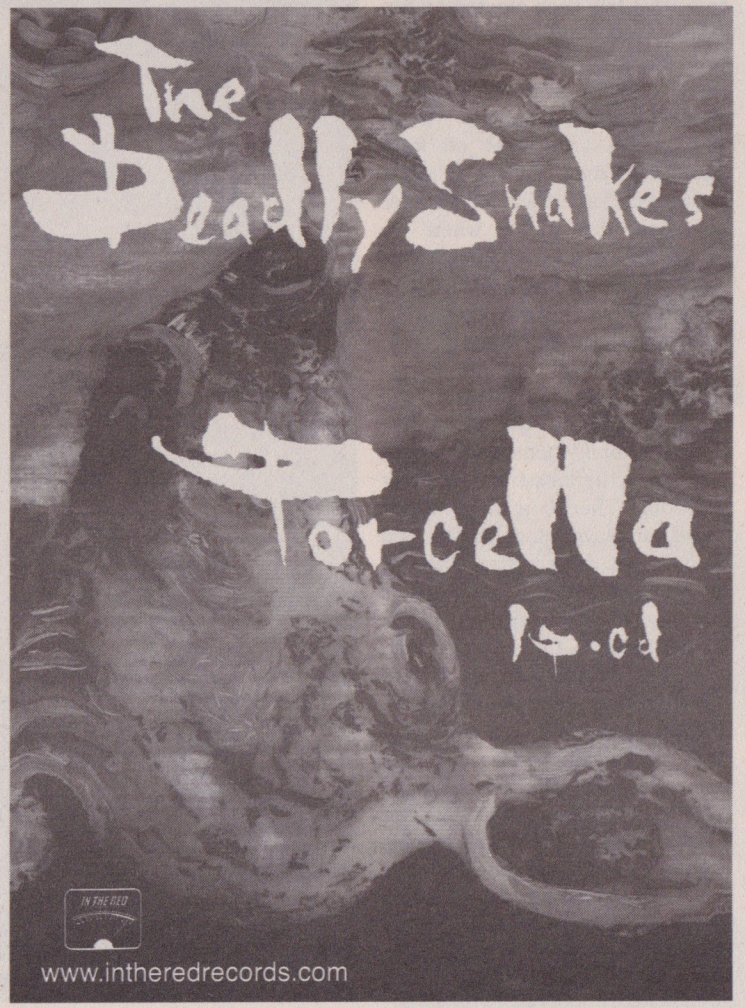
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is from. How many people did he lose in the war? Instead of trying to get Blake or Paul to translate such a personal question, I compliment him on the pin-ups of smiling women that he's got on the dashboard's speedometer and fuel gauge.

We arrive at our first checkpoint and Hosni is flagged down. He pulls his ancient black Mercedes into the parking lot of a military office. We sit in the car while he talks to the officers in the building. Fifteen minutes later he rejoins us and we're off. Hosni speaks only Arabic and doesn't tell us what transpired inside. We drive on through a storybook Bible landscape of rock-strewn hills, tree-lined valleys and the occasional flock of sheep.

Our first stop is Beaufort Castle, a thousand-year-old military outpost on a desolate hilltop. From Beaufort there are views of northern Israel and southern Syria as well as all of South Lebanon. The castle's crumbling walls have been battered in conflicts between Crusaders, Ottomans and Arabs. It was occupied by Palestinian guerillas until the Israeli invasion in 1982. When the Israelis withdrew in 2000 they blew up portions of the castle and turned it over to the Lebanese. A Hezbollah flag flies above a metal shelter pockmarked with bullet holes that has been erected on top of the rubble. Pieces of mortars lie in the grass and there's a large sign erected by "Hezbollah Military Media" in the parking lot. We are advised not to wander off from established roads, as the hillsides are mined. Blake, Paul and I confer and agree that this is where we would also build a castle: in this way, three America tourists validate a thousand years of military history by way of a thousand hours of video game strategizing.

After clambering around the castle we head to the Kalaa Rest House, a family-themed restaurant

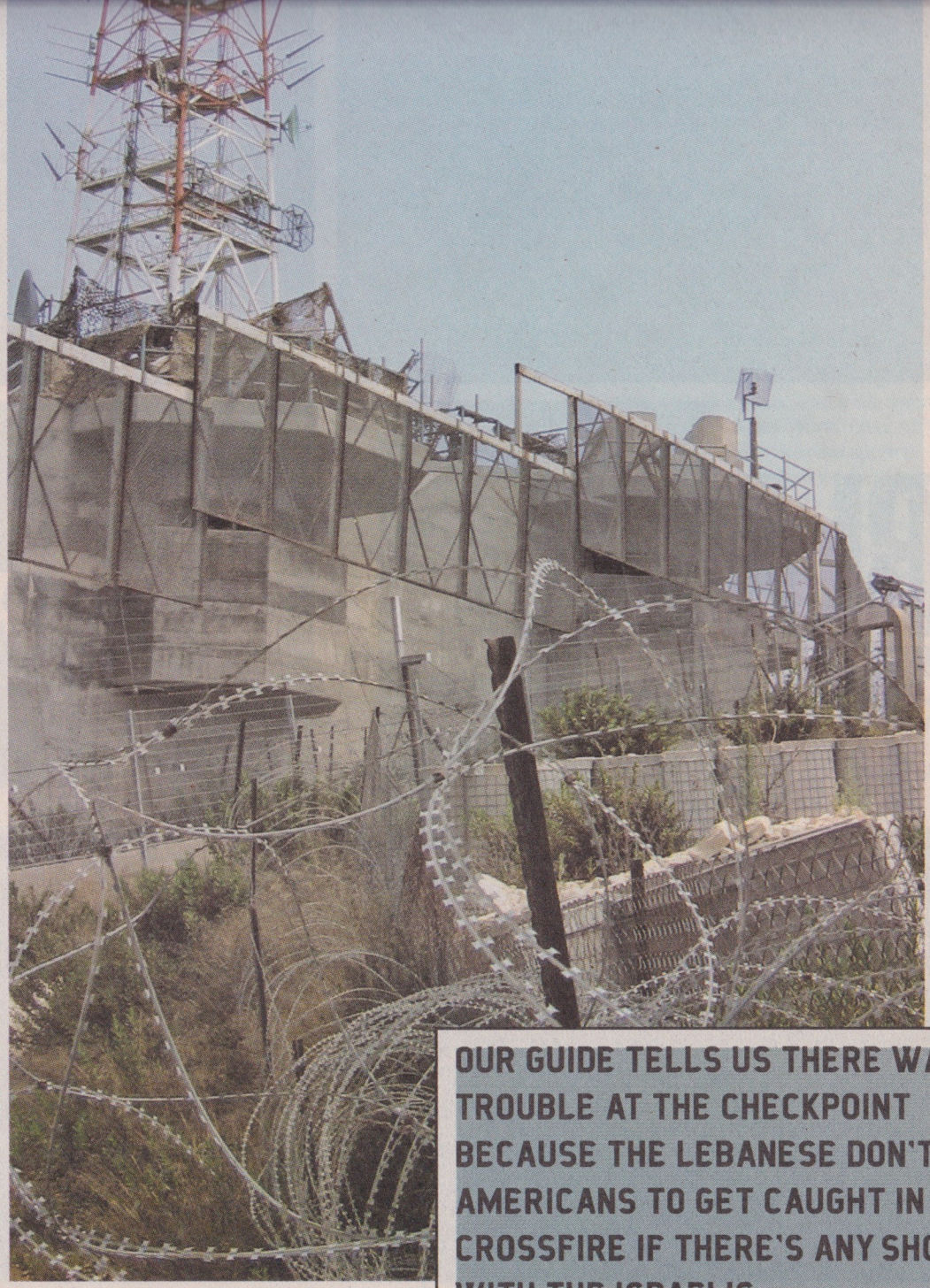


Israeli listening station. South Lebanon.

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After clambering around the castle we head to the Kalaa Rest House, a family-themed restaurant just below the former PLO mortar positions. There's a small Ferris wheel and playground. It's deserted today, but apparently crowded on the weekends with families interested in surveying Israeli listening posts—the arrays of radio towers and satellite dishes used to monitor Lebanese communications. We eat shawerma and shanklich and Hosni teaches Blake and Paul some sort of Arabic phrases that nobody bothers to translate for me. He tells us there was trouble at the checkpoint because the Lebanese don't want Americans to get caught in the crossfire if there's any shooting with the Israelis.

The next stop on our tour is



OUR GUIDE TELLS US THERE WAS TROUBLE AT THE CHECKPOINT BECAUSE THE LEBANESE DON'T WANT AMERICANS TO GET CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE IF THERE'S ANY SHOOTNG WITH THE ISRAELIS.

the Fatima Gate, a former border crossing with Israel that has been closed since Hezbollah's victory in South Lebanon. It's next to the town of Kfar Kila, a desolate settlement of half-built structures. At the site of the former gate, there's a blown-up Israeli troop transport, several stone pillars representing Israeli leaders that Lebanese tourists cast stones at, and a Hezbollah gift shoppe. The angry looking dudes at the shoppe eye us as we step out of Hosni's rusty Benz. They pop in a cassette and start blasting martial music out of an unnecessarily large PA. "This music makes me feel pumped up for some martyrdom operations," says Blake. There's a billboard detailing just such an operation, recounted in curiously militant broken English, "Hezbollinglish," if you will. It speaks of a guy who blew himself up "transforming Israeli soldiers into masses of fire and limb" and features an artist's rendering of the violence. We're told we can take pictures of the Israeli side of the border, but nothing on the Lebanese side for Hezbollah security reasons. Of course there's nothing but empty buildings all within view of the Israeli lights and cameras and listening equipment just a few dozen feet away.

Further down the path running along the border there's an abandoned house on the Israeli side. It's covered in protective grills and fences to deflect anything that might be thrown at it, and there are lights and other equipment protruding from its windows. There's nothing on the Lebanese side to see beyond a bit of graffiti that reads, in English, "Sharon is a dog."

On our way back we buy some keychains adorned with their striking green and yellow Hezbollah logo: an arm clutching a Kalashnikov raised defiantly over

I imagine that Shin Bet keychains would be just as much of a controversial commodity, there are no Israeli souvenir stands on their side of the fence.

Though I find the Lebanese civil war to be hopelessly confusing, one grand irony that sticks out in my mind is the Israeli alliance with the Christian Phalangist militias. The Phalangists were formed in 1936 by Pierre Gemayel after visiting Germany for the Olympics. "In every system in the world, you can find something good," he told Robert Fisk in a 1982 interview. "But Nazism was not Nazism at all. The word came afterwards. In their system, I saw discipline. And we in the Middle East needed discipline more than anything else." Of course Muslim leaders were not exactly opponents of National Socialism either. But in a cynical move during the war, the Israelis allied themselves with these militias against the array of native Lebanese forces and the PLO. Under the guise of the South Lebanese Army (SLA) these Phalangists perpetrated some of the worse civilian massacres of the war—particularly in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila. They also administered the notorious Khiam Prison where Hezbollah guerillas were interred and tortured alongside Shia villagers guilty of little more than living nearby.

There's not much to the prison, which sits on top of a hill overlooking the town of Khiam. It serves as a memorial and what looks like a Hezbollah conference center. The prison itself is drab and white. The halls are empty but for a few signs indicating prisoner quarters in their tiny pre-Red Cross inspection condition, and the slightly roomier post-inspection state. If people died in

paint and Hezbollah. Blake points out posters featuring the disguised swastika of the Syrian National Socialist party. Hosni takes a call on his mobile phone, then hands it to me. It's Kate on the line. She tells me that the colonel she was supposed to contact never returned her phone calls until we were well into Southern Lebanon. Hosni vouched for us as non-troublesome travelers and then bribed the guards on our behalf. She's warning me that he's going to ask for an extra 20 dollars or so, which we will of course gladly pay him.

We're leaving the next day for Damascus. I spend the night in our hotel room watching Melody Arabia, Arabic music television. The videos depict colorful parties with lots of dancing and occasionally a lonely man or woman pining for an absent lover. They play out on a screen where text messages from around the Arab world are displayed on a scrolling ticker. Most of the racy, fun videos are shot here in liberal Lebanon. Kate tells me they often challenge societal rules in subtle ways, with women falling for men not of their social class, or by sliding in a few explicitly gay characters in the background. Saudi Arabia's King Fahd died a few days ago and there are dozens of channels on the satellite feed commemorating his expiration by reading the Koran in its entirety in voiceover while broadcasting his picture.

Later, on my own, I head down to Rue Bliss, the main drag in the Hamra neighborhood. I'm hungry as my stomach is still instantly liquefying everything I eat. I get a shawerma sandwich and I stop in an Internet café populated by hyperactive Lebanese kids playing network games. I check my email as they stalk each other with machine guns through a maze of

Top: Mural in the yard at Khiam Prison. South Lebanon.
Bottom: Blown-up Israeli vehicle on display at Fatima Gate. Southern Lebanon



recounted in curiously militant broken English, "Hezbollinglish," if you will. It speaks of a guy who blew himself up "transforming Israeli soldiers into masses of fire and limb" and features an artist's rendering of the violence. We're told we can take pictures of the Israeli side of the border, but nothing on the Lebanese side for Hezbollah security reasons. Of course there's nothing but empty buildings all within view of the Israeli lights and cameras and listening equipment just a few dozen feet away.

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On our way back we buy some keychains adorned with their striking green and yellow Hezbollah logo: an arm clutching a Kalashnikov raised defiantly over stylized Arabic script. My favorite is one shaped like a heart that has Nasrallah with an AK smiling wildly, Photoshopped underneath a picture of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. What are the ethical implications of spending our money with armed organizations considered to be terrorist groups by many outsiders, and especially by the Israelis? Paul suggests that we've already given plenty of money in income tax to the Israeli military by way of American aid, and they have inflicted far more civilian casualties than Hezbollah. Thus we're kind of evening things out between two vicious sides in a horribly depressing conflict. While discipline more than anything else." Of course Muslim leaders were not exactly opponents of National Socialism either. But in a cynical move during the war, the Israelis allied themselves with these militias against the array of native Lebanese forces and the PLO. Under the guise of the South Lebanese Army (SLA) these Phalangists perpetrated some of the worse civilian massacres of the war—particularly in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Chatila. They also administered the notorious Khiam Prison where Hezbollah guerillas were interred and tortured alongside Shia villagers guilty of little more than living nearby.

There's not much to the prison, which sits on top of a hill overlooking the town of Khiam. It serves as a memorial and what looks like a Hezbollah conference center. The prison itself is drab and white. The halls are empty but for a few signs indicating prisoner quarters in their tiny pre-Red Cross inspection condition, and the slightly roomier post-inspection state. If people died in a room, there's a sign indicating just where and how they were "martyred." Signs in Hezbollingish denote the rooms for "the boss of whippers," and "for investigation with the help of traitors." Though the museum is supposedly staffed by former inmates, the only people here besides a busload of French tourists are some guys lazing around in the shade in the main courtyard.

We ride back to Beirut and watch the billboards pass by. If one were to gauge the interests of South Lebanon based on roadside advertising, one would imagine a community concerned strictly with shampoo, Dutch Boy-brand parties with lots of dancing and occasionally a lonely man or woman pining for an absent lover. They play out on a screen where text messages from around the Arab world are displayed on a scrolling ticker. Most of the racy, fun videos are shot here in liberal Lebanon. Kate tells me they often challenge societal rules in subtle ways, with women falling for men not of their social class, or by sliding in a few explicitly gay characters in the background. Saudi Arabia's King Fahd died a few days ago and there are dozens of channels on the satellite feed commemorating his expiration by reading the Koran in its entirety in voiceover while broadcasting his picture.

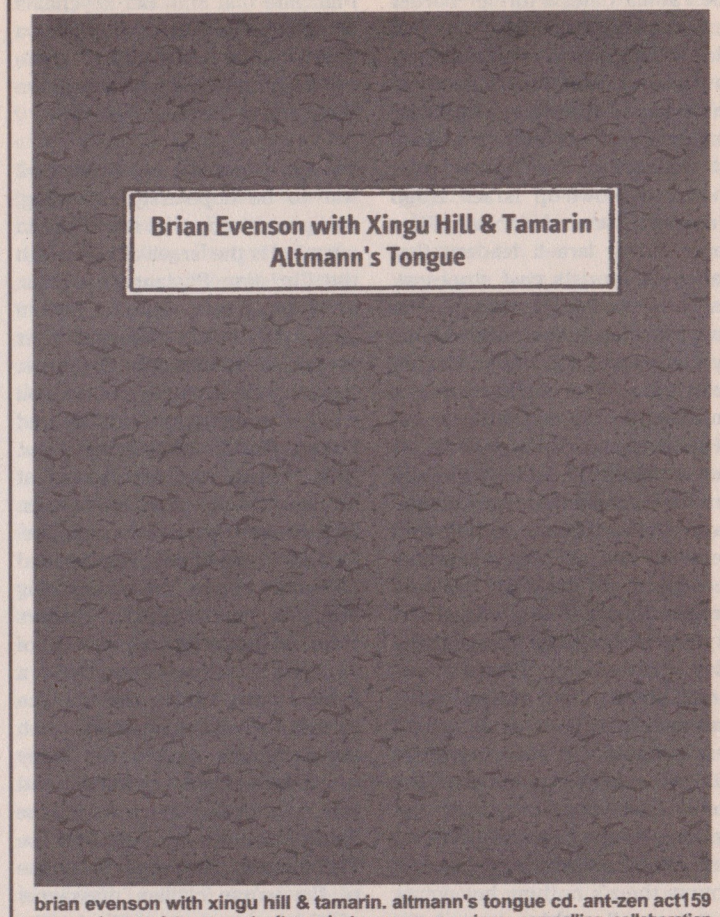
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NEXT ISSUE: The journey to Syria begins with a hijacking.









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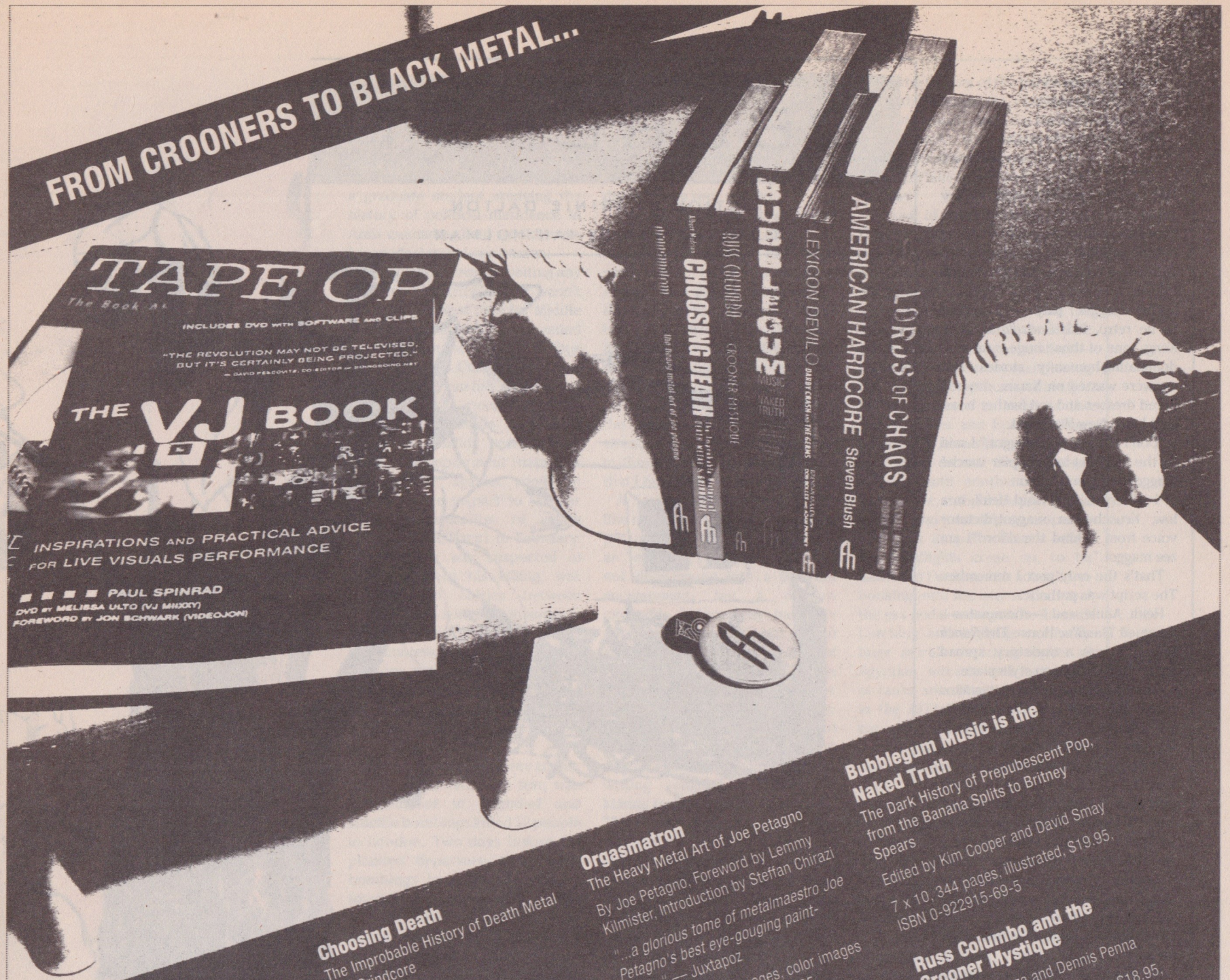


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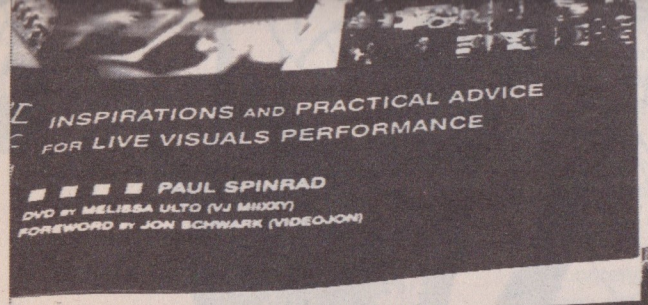
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I'd want a range life
If I could settle down.
If I could settle down,
Then I would settle down.
—Pavement

We were performing a play about this maggot on our kitchen floor who grew until he was squishing out the windows, suffocating us and all those who came into the Ranch House.

The maggot play was meant to be retro, like *Godzilla* or *King Kong*—one of those huge-creatures-dominating-humanity stories. But we were wasted on Xanax, dressed in red dresses and red feather boas, so it had a New Wave feel.

"Don't eat me, you maggot," I said to the two-foot-long papier maché maggot lying on the floor.

"I vill crush you," said Heidi, in a low, Kruschevian maggot/dictator voice from behind the door. "I am zee maggot."

That's the only part I remember. The script was pathetic.

Heidi, Annie, and I—roommates—renamed The *Blue* House The *Ranch* House. It was a one-story, spread out, casual Craftsman-style place.

Everything was decrepit: termites ruined the walls and vines grew in the windows. We spent our time learning Carter Family songs. Sara and Maybelle are easier to imitate than A.P.'s baritone parts. I can still play "Single Girl," "Wandering Boy," and "Wildwood Flower" on guitar. We had pie parties and sang to guys we invited over to eat elderberry pie hot out of the oven. The elderberries came from trees in the park because we had no money to buy grocery store ones. Countryfolk wannabes for sure.

My first night in that house I raided the basement and found a shawl, rusty tools, and knitting equipment. I had a spooky meeting with the ghost of the old lady who died there. She

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My first night in that house I raided the basement and found a shawl, rusty tools, and knitting equipment. I had a spooky meeting with the ghost of the old lady who died there. She was making the rooms cold. Drafts of winter air were leaking through sealed windowsills even though it was summer. I told her to leave because three girls were moving in. I was alone and sensed her in the corner of the den, rocking in her invisible rocking chair. I heard the chair creaking and could smell the stale scent of the elderly. She'd died in the 1970s and no one had lived there since, the realtor told me. It made sense, then, that someone should tell her to beat it.

Back when I was nine my aunt told me that to get rid of a poltergeist, I should be firm. It really works. The Ranch House Ghost departed that night. Our theory was that she'd been buried under the avocado tree



in the backyard. It had years of leaf debris piled beneath it, and grew avocados the size of cantaloupes. We figured the human compost had beefed them up. Also, next to the tree was a defunct incinerator—convenient. Her son must have folded her up, shoved her in, fired up the stove, and burned her into an ashen pile, ideal for fertilizer. That's why our tree kicked ass.

There are a lot of ghosts and good avocado trees in The Echo Park. I didn't know there was a "the" before Echo Park until I went to the local liquor store, House of Spirits, to get tequila for our "ranchwarming" party. I was talking to the lady behind the counter, telling her I'd just moved back into the neighborhood.

"It's the only place I feel at home," I said.

"So many kinds of people. Less old people now. They're all dying," she said.

I knew she meant the Echo Park Convalescent Home down the street, where heaps of old people roll around in wheelchairs and smell everything up. No one likes that haunted house.

The guys behind me in line started in.

"You used to live somewhere else?" one asked. He looked tight in his LA Dodgers cap, oversized white tee shirt, Dickies shorts, and Nike Cortez sneakers with white tube socks pulled up over his calves. All his friends looked the same and had shaved heads.

"Yeah. But I missed stuff, like kids setting off fireworks. Or wild dogs," I said.

"You always come back to The Echo Park," he said. "You can't ever leave The Echo Park." He nodded his head at my tequila bottle.

I saw a dead body while I was living in the Ranch House. Not in the house, down a couple miles in

asked me one afternoon while she washed potatoes in the sink.

I stood leaning on the doorjamb. "A range life," I said. That was my favorite song. I'd drink gin on the porch and listen to it. I'd gaze at the corn we planted where the lawn used to be and think about settling down. "Why?" I continued. "You sick of me? Just because I refrigerate butter?" Heidi left it out on the counter in a country style butter dish. I hate soft, hot butter.

"Remember when the cats attacked it?" she asked. Her green gingham apron was spotted with potato bits.

It was Easter morning. We were out hunting colored eggs under the avocado tree. When we shooed the cats away, there was this little pile of butter scalloped into pyramid shape by lick marks from their sandpapery tongues. Land O' Lakes, unsalted—with the box where you can tear off the Indian princess and fold her knees into her chest area so she has major hooters.

There were two rules of the house: to wear clothes only when necessary, and to always burn candles and incense to appease spirits. Nudity made us feel closer to those in nether-regions. Bare skin seemed more ghosty. We weren't trying to attract ghosts, but we respected them. The Old Lady Ghost was gone, but we still smelled her occasionally. I'd catch a whiff when I opened the medicine cabinet or stepped into the laundry room. She smelled like the nursing home, like musty sweaters and dirty flannel sheets. Ghosts smell pretty much the same as those about to die—which is totally separate from the way dead bodies smell. Ghosts aren't rotten, but there is a hint of putrefaction that makes me aware of their status: *not dead yet* or *already dead and separated from the physical*

zucchinis in the crisper had gone bad. "Myrna, what can get candle wax out of carpet?" A votive candle had burned all night, tipped over, and run between the carpet hairs in our living room.

"An iron and a dish towel," she said. She showed us the method, making ironing movements in mid-air.

We fell asleep huddled on the floor around a candle because my mom called and was having visions of a murderer living next door to us, waiting to strike. My mom had psychic powers that we took pretty seriously, not seriously enough to move out that night as she had requested, but seriously enough to burn extra candles and incense, and to keep all the doors locked with the cats inside.

"Why is there so much spiritual drama here?" Annie asked that night. We listened to *Let It Bleed* by the Rolling Stones while locked in.

"Welcome to Echo Park," Heidi said. I thought again of that old folk's home down the block, and pictured their garden filled with car exhaust-coated agapanthus and weedy impatiens, barely tended to. The institutional garden, devoid of love.

"Do you two ever get a bad feeling when you walk past that convalescent hospital?" I asked. I kept thinking of that awful place. I took it as a sign, but I didn't know of what.

"No, except that everyone there's going to die," said Heidi.

"Maybe all their fears combine and rub off on you," Annie said.

That night I dreamt I was Sara Carter. I was dressed in raggedy clothes and holey leather shoes. The next day I tried to write a song about Echo Park, about how when I'm about to die I hope people will bring me back and bury me...but not under an old willow tree. Where then? In Echo





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"Yeah. But I missed stuff, like kids setting off fireworks. Or wild dogs," I said.

"You always come back to The Echo Park," he said. "You can't ever leave The Echo Park." He nodded his head at my tequila bottle.

I saw a dead body while I was living in the Ranch House. Not in the house, down a couple miles in the donut store parking lot. I was walking by, and there was yellow tape all around as if the cops thought people were going to poke the body or something. It was lying in a conspicuously contorted position, legs bent in wrong directions, neck turned too far over. Man, middle-aged. No blood. Almost like he'd been pushed out of the passenger seat by someone driving at high speed and rolled all the way into the parking lot. I associated the body with the donuts and haven't eaten there since. After all, Ms. Donut is right around the corner. It's the feminist donut shop.

"What kind of life would you have if you could change yours?" Heidi

cats away, there was this little pile of butter scalloped into pyramid shape by lick marks from their sandpapery tongues. Land O' Lakes, unsalted—with the box where you can tear off the Indian princess and fold her knees into her chest area so she has major hooters.

There were two rules of the house: to wear clothes only when necessary, and to always burn candles and incense to appease spirits. Nudity made us feel closer to those in nether-regions. Bare skin seemed more ghosty. We weren't trying to attract ghosts, but we respected them. The Old Lady Ghost was gone, but we still smelled her occasionally. I'd catch a whiff when I opened the medicine cabinet or stepped into the laundry room. She smelled like the nursing home, like musty sweaters and dirty flannel sheets. Ghosts smell pretty much the same as those about to die—which is totally separate from the way dead bodies smell. Ghosts aren't rotten, but there is a hint of putrefaction that makes me aware of their status: *not dead yet* or *already dead and separated from the physical body*. Why don't ghosts smell fresh and young? Maybe old people don't remember how they smelled as kids so neither can ghosts.

There was another old lady next door, alive but barely. She grew candy-striped beets and okra in her front yard. Yet she didn't smell like she was dying. She prided herself on her odorless house.

"I hate bad smells," Myrna said as she gave the three of us a tour of her house one day. It was a Craftsman-style too, stained dark wood inside, black velvet curtains over the windows. The bank was threatening to take it from her. "Your house smells," she added.

"Just that one time," I said. Some

to keep all the doors locked with the cats inside.

"Why is there so much spiritual drama here?" Annie asked that night. We listened to *Let It Bleed* by the Rolling Stones while locked in.

"Welcome to Echo Park," Heidi said. I thought again of that old folk's home down the block, and pictured their garden filled with car exhaust-coated agapanthus and weedy impatiens, barely tended to. The institutional garden, devoid of love.

"Do you two ever get a bad feeling when you walk past that convalescent hospital?" I asked. I kept thinking of that awful place. I took it as a sign, but I didn't know of what.

"No, except that everyone there's going to die," said Heidi.

"Maybe all their fears combine and rub off on you," Annie said.

That night I dreamt I was Sara Carter. I was dressed in raggedy clothes and holey leather shoes. The next day I tried to write a song about Echo Park, about how when I'm about to die I hope people will bring me back and bury me...but not under an old willow tree. Where then? In Echo Park Lake, under the lotus flowers littered with McDonald's wrappers and devoured cobs of corn? Further down Alvarado St. in MacArthur Park, where so many dead bodies are dredged out of the lake? Would I be buried under the aptly named House of Spirits? *None of these places are worthy of my corpse*, I thought. Just as in the old ballads, I want to be buried by the seashore or under some significant tree.

We got evicted from The Ranch House when the bank bought it. Shortly before we got kicked out, our dog died, which was the first sign of things winding down. Then Myrna, our neighbor, declared

(continued on page 69)

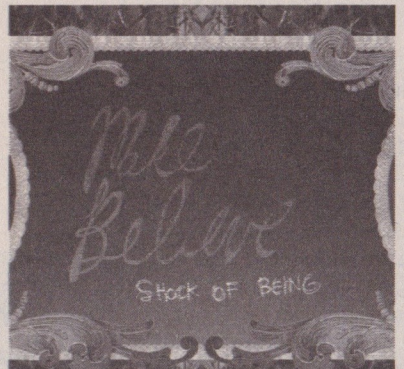


Excerpted from *Wide Eyed* by Trinie Dalton, a selection of Dennis Cooper's Little House on Bowery series, published by Akashic Books, 2005. www.akashicbooks.com. Copyright Trinie Dalton. First appeared in *Lost on Purpose* (Avalon, 2005), ed. Amy Prior.

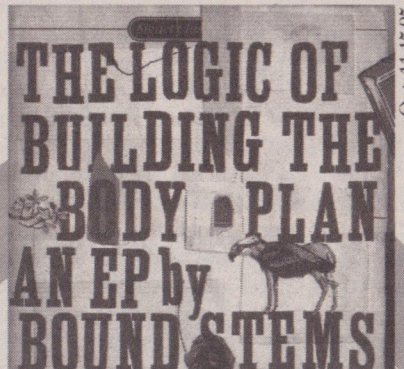


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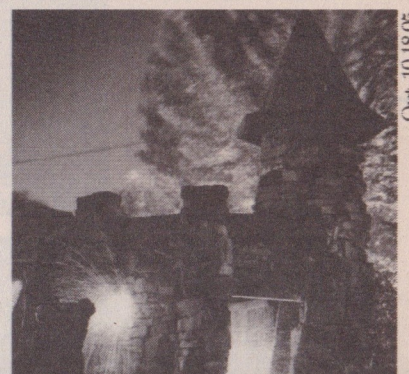


Make Believe — Shock of Being



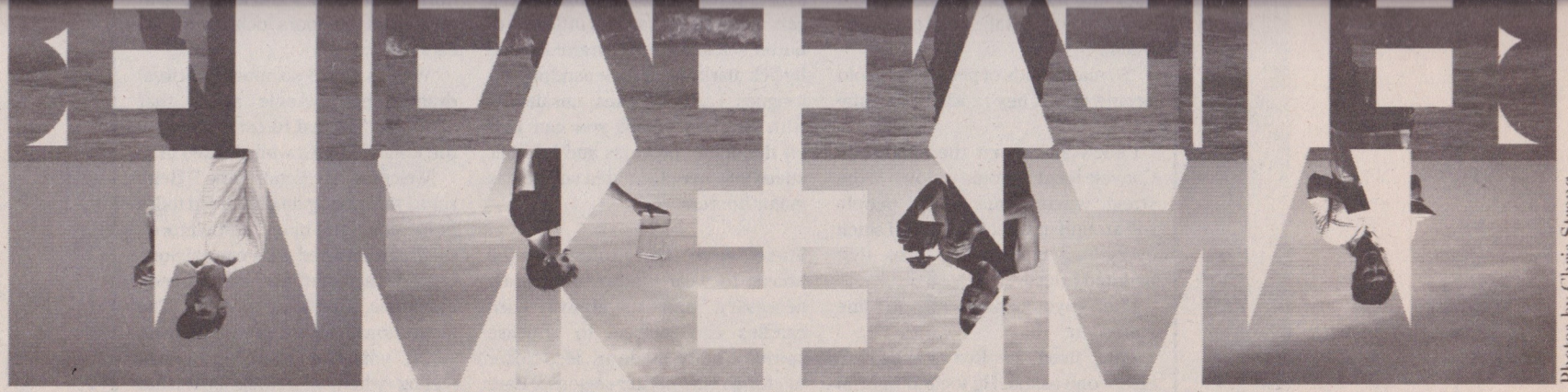
Out 11.15.05

Bound Stems — The Logic of Building the Body Plan



Out 10.18.05

Voltage — Building the Bass Castle Vol. I

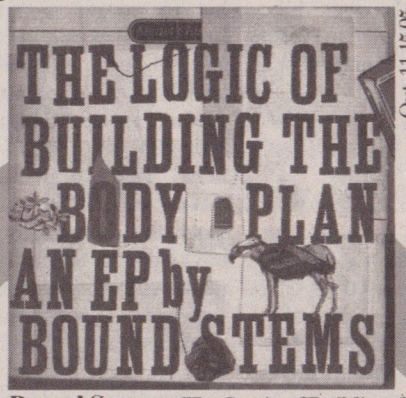


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Make Believe ⁘ Shock of Being



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Bound Stems ⁘ The Logic of Building the Body Plan



Out 10.18.05

Voltage ⁘ Building the Bass Castle, Vol. I



Chin Up Chin Up ⁘ s/t



Sybris ⁘ s/t



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There's more to come next year, including new albums from **Low Skies** and **Lying In States**, as well as other sweet jams.

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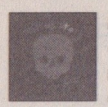
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If we could hear the angels singing about us, they would be in harmony with these chosen sons of Boonville, Missouri.



RICHARD YOUNGS
The Naive Shaman CD/LP

Deeply personal song cycle



TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Reviewed: Shadow of the Colossus

for Sony PlayStation 2

"Nor is it to be thought that man is either the oldest or the last of earth's masters, or that the common bulk of life and substances walks alone. The Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be... They walk serene and primal... They walk unseen and foul in lonely places where the Words have been spoken and the Rites howled through at their Seasons. The wind gibbers with Their voices, and the earth mutters with Their consciousness. They bend the forest and crush the city, yet may not forest or city behold the hand that smites.... Man rules now where They ruled once; They shall soon rule where man rules now. After summer is winter, and after winter summer. They wait patient and potent, for here shall They reign again." –from "The Dunwich Horror" by H.P. Lovecraft

It begins in an ancient temple, or a temple that certainly looks antediluvian, deserted except for a young man who lays upon the floor, insensate. He wakes slowly. Dressed in raggedy homespun, he looks like an androgynous gutterpunk, circa 960 A.D. The temple is wide and long, bounded on both sides by columns hewn from rock. At one end of the temple, on a stone bier at the top of a short flight of steps, lays a young woman, sleeping a deathless fairy-tale sleep. Or dead, perhaps, awaiting burial. Indistinct voices speaking no known language can be heard, faintly when you (as the young man) approach her, and though nothing is clear, your purpose seems obvious and instinctual: wake the girl, somehow. Her resting place is at the end of the temple open to the vast countryside, and the light that comes from the outside is hazy and autumnal, golden.

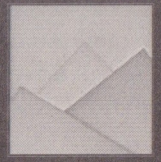
You are, inevitably, armed. Your arsenal includes, and will only ever include, a plain sword and bow and arrow. The sword is, of course, magic: when you hold it aloft in the sunlight, it seems to collect the light, grabbing sunbeams from the air and focusing them into a bright beacon. You discover that if you experiment with turning in certain directions, the formerly disparate and scattered beams tend to form into a focused, single beam. The only other living thing in the temple is a

it. Being no dummy in the ways of video games' enchanted objects, you decide to aim your horse in the direction the beams collect. Your trip is untroubled. The verdant but quietly desolate and melancholy countryside seems to number only you and your horse as living inhabitants. The scent carried on the wind would be, if you could smell anything, narcotic and mournful, an opiate of burning, fallen leaves and other dying things.

The beams of light lead you to a cliff face that, if it could, would drop to its knees and *beg* you to climb it, so you do after a bit of trial and error experimentation, driven by a strange sense of purpose and obligation to the sleeping girl, feeling that at the top of this cliff, something awaits. This is important, you think. And then you are there at the top of the cliff, and it is there that you finally see it: standing at least one hundred feet tall, the minotaur-thing strides back forth across the length of a small valley. It doesn't drip blood from its fangs, snatch cows from a fleeing herd and toss them into its mouth like popcorn, or even open its mouth to spray great gouts of fire at an unfortunately located village. It simply walks back and forth carrying a great club, looking as if it was born equally of stone, metal and flesh, possessing the ground it strides as befitting a godlike force of nature, and you know, with a heavy heart, that your task is to use your basic

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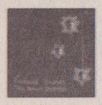
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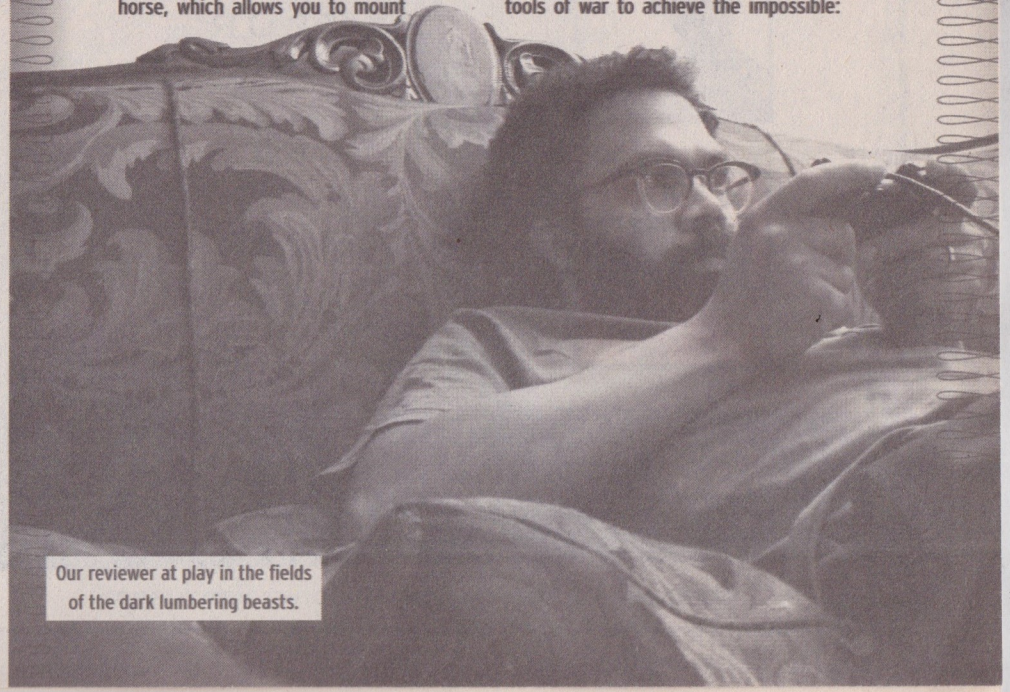
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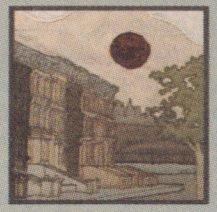
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Our reviewer at play in the fields of the dark lumbering beasts.

ANNUAL REPORT 2005

1ST & 2ND QUARTER: IMPROVED OPERATIONAL VIABILITY



BRIGHT EYES

I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning CD/LP



and

Digital Ash in a Digital Urn CD/LP

"Layered over lovely country or electronic-tinged sounds, Conor's hopeful lyrics are small reminders of beauty for the existentially downtrodden of this world. I would listen to him. Not just his music, but him."— Jane, January 2005

"Whatever you may have heard about Bright Eyes...well, just forget about it. Because *I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning* is not only the best record he's ever made, it's quite possibly one of the best folk records ever made. And it just may prove to be a classic."— Filter, Winter 2004

"An album made from the most impersonal of instruments that will speak directly to every listener lucky enough to press play." – NME on *Digital Ash in a Digital Urn*

3RD & 4TH QUARTER: LEVERAGED STRATEGIC CAPABILITY



CRITERIA

when we break CD/LP



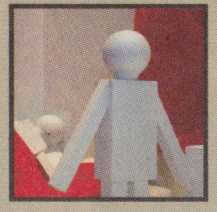
CURSIVE

The Difference Between Houses and Homes (Lost Songs and Loose Ends 1995-2001) CD/LP



ORENDA FINK

Invisible Ones CD



BROKEN SPINDLES

inside/absent CD/LP



MARIA





Digital Ash
in a Digital Urn CD/LP

it just may prove to be a classic." — Filter, Winter 2004

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when we break CD/LP



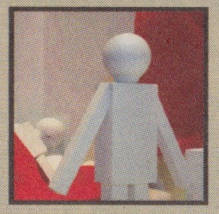
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the destruction of this beautiful behemoth before you. The first part of the destruction is an academic puzzle: how do you scale such a thing and find its weaknesses? And once you find its weaknesses, how do you humble it and then slay it? And once you do this impossible thing, you know that you cannot rest, and that the girl sleeping in the temple cannot wake, until you find the other towering creatures, Colossi, titans, Old Ones, whatever they are, and destroy their terrible beauty as well.

And that's it. There's no expository dialogue explaining the plot in the comically serious jargon as common as air in the video game world. There's no attempt to set your Quixote-esque pursuit of the ever-larger and ever more fancifully rendered Colossi in the rigid frame of good versus evil or right versus wrong, as the conventional wisdom of storytelling demands. You simply are, and your quest simply is. It is, quite simply, an extraordinarily exhilarating and confoundingly beautiful experience. And this is a video game, for Pete's sake: a heavy, heavy video game full of weird wonder, atavistic dread and thrillingly bizarre, avant-garde leanings.

In fact, at times *Shadow of the Colossus* feels more like an epic-length stoner rock record than a video game. While playing the game I begin to eagerly riff on the experience, translating it to other media. I imagine buying a quadruple album called Shadow of the Colossus (self-titled, of course); a concept album where each track tries to convey the awe and reverence inspired by titanic, pre-historic godlike creatures; an album where each side-long track is number-named, from "Colossus I" to "Colossus XVI" (these plain titles are necessary, as the Colossi's real names cannot be pronounced by mere humans); an album that sounds like a trio of back-of-the-van genius longhairs trying to express their herb-induced visions of some sort of mythworld with beautifully droning guitar, quaking bass and slooooowwwww thudding Hammer-of-the-Gods drumming. And, in fact, you can drop needle on Earth's

nights, nights he's spent sketching pictures and carving clay maquettes of creatures that look like they come straight out of the nightmares of a zookeeper of Greek myths. The resulting non-existent film—shot in the desolate Almerian landscape and starring a baby-faced Kurt Russell as the nameless boy giantkiller and renamed *Shadow of the Colossus* after its original title, *Clash of the Titans*, is ditched—is four hours long, will be dismissed as fraudulent, pseudo-deep sub-Tolkien claptrap by critics and kept in perpetual circulation on the midnight cult revival circuit for decades to come. Collaborators Ennio Morricone and Jimi Hendrix are surprise nominees for a 1971 Academy Award for Best Score but, unsurprisingly, lose. Copies of the ultra-rare soundtrack are highly sought after by crate diggers and heads worldwide.

Of course *Shadow of the Colossus* is not a wished-for eight-sided album, or a phony cult monster movie. It is what it is, and that is a video game. But it's not without precedent. *Shadow of the Colossus* shares its strange DNA with *Ico*, a game released four years ago for the PlayStation 2 and which was produced by the same Sony Japan design team led by chief designer Fumito Ueda. Ico begins almost as a rote exercise in video game princess-saving before taking a turn for the weird, ethereal and lush. Taking place entirely within the walls of an enormous, labyrinthine castle, the titular hero of *Ico* was a boy exiled to the structure, possibly cast out from his society due to his unusual deformity: a pair of horns growing from his head. Also trapped in the bleak and quiet castle is a girl who is beset by malefactors that are more shadow than substance who hunger to take her away. Instead of the inevitable quest to find something, your mission is to protect, avoid and puzzle out the mysteries of the Rube Goldberg-goes-cyclopean castle. As with *Shadow of the Colossus*, the prevaling mood is not one of gung-ho







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For some reason, *Shadow of the Colossus* summons—for me, at least—false memories of fantasy head films that never came to be, works along the order of the infamous abortive Dali/Disney "Destino" project, or Jodorowsky's never-was adaptation of *Dune*. Dig this pitch: revered stop-motion animator Ray Harryhausen (all apologies to the great man for using his name in sorta vain) makes a pilgrimage to Italy in 1969 after catching a quadruple-bill of Sergio Leone's westerns. The screening has inspired a vision: this director is the guy to helm a near-plotless monster movie Ray's conceived over some recent sleepless crate diggers and heads worldwide.

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You must regard first, slay later.

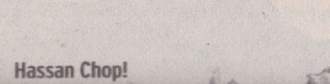
snicker-snack dragon slaying, but one of melancholic, lonely duty. Inevitably, *Ico* did not sell well enough to be classified as a commercial success by the bean counters. No matter, though. It's justly considered a masterpiece of the form, and its aesthetic successor carries its banner forward.

Take, for instance, the enemies in *Shadow of the Colossus*, the Colossi themselves. They are great, shuddersome, shambling things that seem to have walked straight out of the twilight of the collective unconscious, the eternal realms of dream and folklore. Their physical appearance suggests they've sprung from the pages of a medieval grimoire, a sketchbook menagerie of ancient beasts kept by a mad court magician and deemed heretical. And I call the Colossi "enemies" loosely, as a means to an end, using basic video game nomenclature; never once playing the game do you actually sense that the creatures you are trying to slay are, actually, things that truly bear any malevolent intent towards you. To call them enemies would be like a seaman calling a typhoon-born wave an enemy, or a hunter lost in the woods cursing a snowstorm as a foe. Forces of nature are, quite literally, bigger than that. Bigger than name-calling. Bigger than real anger. They can be deadly, no doubt, but to waste breath and energy making an enemy of something so alien is worse than pointless. It's as if the Colossi themselves are calling to you, beckoning you, willingly attracting the agent of their downfall to their doorsteps. And though they resist you and your sword and your arrow as surely as you would resist the persistent attentions of a wasp, there's a sense of the inexorability of fate and history in all of this. If you do not succeed, there will be another hero on another quest, and they are surely doomed to pass from physical presence into the stuff of memory and legend. It's not a question of "if," it's a question of when.

Case in point: a common design conceit in game controls is to assign a button on the game controller to target whatever thing you're fighting against; press the button and your attention is directed unwaveringly upon the thing you wish to kill, or bounce a coconut off the head of, or whatever. Shadow of the Colossus has such a button, but the function it serves is telling in language used to describe it. Upon your first sighting of a Colossus, a helpful hint pops up on the screen that instructs you to press a button to "Gaze at the Colossus." Ha! Not "Target the Colossus" but "Gaze at the Colossus." You are, of course, aware that your ultimate goal is the humbling of this towering creature, but the game's designers can't help but remind you, however subtly, that the things you are pitted against are not only worthy of reverence, but demand worship as well. The fact that such a gesture has been included in the game, that you can't kill a god without fixedly looking at it and considering all that it is, is nothing short of mad, poetic genius.

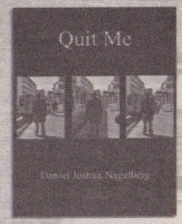
There are no other adversaries. Unlike most video games, time is not wasted pitting you against repetitive onslaughts of minor imps and demons. The only other real adversary is the entropic loneliness that accompanies you as you embark on increasingly longer journeys on your horse and confront more elaborate environmental obstacles on your way to your next encounter with a Colossus—the lack of other breathing creatures on these rides is effectively oppressive and gloomy, as if the land itself were conspiring to break your spirit and turn you from your quest. Go home, the windy sound effects seem to whisper. Go home, sit by the fire, grow old and die warm and safe. Forget this fool's errand. You don't heed the wind, of course, but...

As of this writing, I'm still trying to finish *Shadow of the Colossus*, to reach the final Colossus and try to take in its vastness, but part of me never, ever wants to get within spitting distance of the oncoming end. Part of me wants to stop short of dispatching my final rival, cease waging



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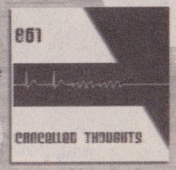


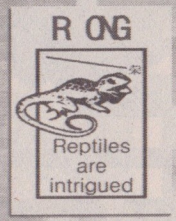
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When friends get together to make music that can only exist outside the lines, RONG happens. This is their sixth studio recording of outrageously original and philosophically challenging material. Admit it, you're curious.

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CONS
TANT

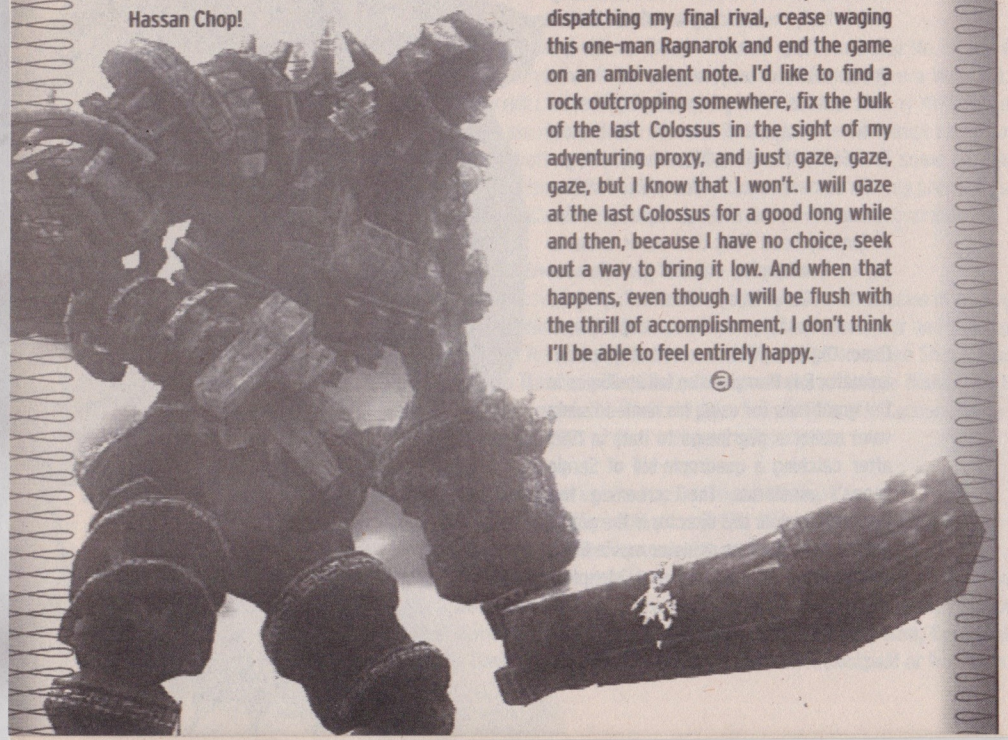
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Hassan Chop!



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CANCELLED THOUGHTS

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BURNT TOAST VINYL AUTUMN 2005



Saxon Shore ::: The Exquisite Death of Saxon Shore *cd/LP*
Characterized by Saxon Shore's lush, intense, melodic brand of instrumental rock, the *Exquisite Death* full-length is a vibrant mix of electronics and acoustic instruments, from the white label 12" sounds of "Marked with Knowledge" to the metallic refrains of "Isolated by the Secret of Your Fellow Men" to the pop sensibilities and hooks of "With a Red Suit You Will Become a Man," all filtered through the expert and artful ears of engineer, producer, and mixer Dave Fridmann (Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev, Sleater-Kinney). Also available, *Luck Will Not Save Us from a Jackpot of Nothing* cdep, *Four Months of Darkness* cd/LP, and *Be a Bright Blue* cd.



Bosque Brown ::: Plays Mara Lee Miller *cd*
For 2005, we humbly unveil the magic of Mara Miller's Bosque Brown. Born and raised in Texas, Mara's songs are heavily influenced by place, channeling Doc Watson, Hank Williams, and Townes Van Zandt. She was discovered by our friend Damien Jurado who says "With the heartache of Kitty Wells and the

BULL TONGUE

Byron Coley & Thurston Moore

Explore the voids of all known undergrounds.

Boston's **Sunburned Hand of the Man** have been devilishly busy this time out, blessing our ears and asses with a shelf-filling pile of audio goodness. The *Complexion* LP (Records) highlights their percussion-and-swoop angle more than some of their others. It's a nice thing to listen to on a rooftop, while ambulances skedaddle around the corners. Bursts of internal static and much less jam-cuss-aktion than some might dig, but we are not they. The *Wedlock* 2LP (Eclipse) is a document of a trek the band made to Alaska three or so years back to play a wedding. Some of it is Wedding Album audio collaging of the haps, but there are also huge patches of the band in a weirdly Hendrixy mode with heavy jam flashes and rhythm underpine. Great looking package, too. And there are at least a couple of new CDRs. *Live in Shit* (Manhand) is an utterly spaced-out live show from some damn time and place, one of our favorites of theirs overall. And *Knifelife* (Manhand) is like eating an electric waffle and grunting about its pleasures or something. There're plenty of analog crosshatches and rich hints of both butter and maple, but that's only part of it, naturally. Bite it hard to discover more.

Seems like **Jessica Rylan** can't do wrong (get it?). Yeah, anyway, she has out a boss new booklet of drawings called *something you entered into or headed towards* (WFOT). We guess the format is color Xerox, and they look totally great. Some are like Adolph Wolffi doing his versions of Patchen's poem-paintings, others are just disturbed (or calm) and beautiful. Rylan mixes word and image with a really bodaciously intellectual primtivism. Worth many peeks, both fast and slow. And, as **Can't**, Jessica has released a super stark-o clipclopped-note-beat-disaster 7" through the supremely jake Ultra Eczema label outta Belgium. The label is run by an illustrator named Dennis Tyfus and his sluice-and-gangrene color creations



Sunburned Hand of the Man

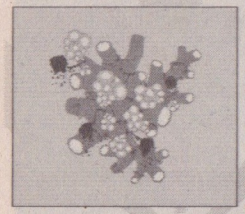
dynamics is a breath of pure meditative smoke. It's true the pair (and their extended family) have recorded a daunting pantload of stuff over the past few years, but this one's particularly CHOICE. Matt's old bandmate (from Tower Recordings), **PG Six**, has a great new LP too, *The Well of Memory* (Perhaps Transparent; CD on Amish). Pat has been playing especially superb shows this past year and this album collects a few live favorites, all of which bristle with his mastery of many strings—guitar, harp, banjo, piano and on and on. There is a sweet melancholia that seeps through every note here. It will ebb and flow through synapses like burning honey. And the word is that his next album may be harp improvs, which would be hipper than shit.

Anyone who has wanted to sample the work of the great American poet, **Charles Potts**, but has been mind-dicked by either the abundance or lack-of-abundance of available titles, has just had a lucky day. *The Portable Potts* (West End Press) is a goddamn glorious paperback compendium of his work throughout a vast array of decades, styles, foci and haircuts. And this book may lack the visual oomph of seeing Charles get blown across the stage at the Arthurfest by Sunn O))), but it's a book that will satisfy in many other ways. It represents a real slice of Potts' work from the wild '60s poems to the insane prose to the cowboy stuff to the Chinese stuff, to the sociology and all points in between. Be a sport and stuff it in someone's stocking this Christmas, it would be a vital gesture in support of true culture.

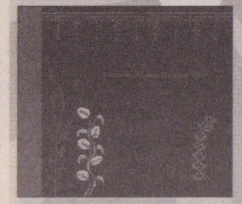
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Sufjan Stevens ::: Seven Swans *LP*



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The MVEE Medicine Show rolls yet again with a stunning new LP, *Moon Jook* (Records), which is the most devilishly musical-qua-musical move they've made in a bit. Matt Valentine's guitar playing is really exceptional here, and Erika Elder's grasp of all "little instrument" melancholia that seeps through every note here. It will ebb and flow through synapses like burning honey. And the word is that his next album may be harp improvs, which would be hipper than shit.

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Sunburned Hand of the Man

Jeremiah Garcia / Ice Cream Man

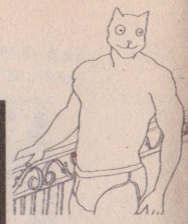
the arrival of two records by **the Loosers**. Not that there's much findable info at hand, but the sounds themselves are sweet. A trio, the Loosers do a surprising number of things at once. Their basic focus is art-damaged power-pus, but they do it in a variety of ways, recalling everyone from Sonic Youth to Jackie O Motherfucker at various times. Their first LP is *For All the Round Suns* (Ruby Red) and it is a pretty wonderful blend of several generations of underground nonsense—from the Birthday Party to NNCK to My Cat Is An Alien—and could easily be the best new CDR from Brooklyn this week, if you know what we mean. But it's a dandy looking LP and that ain't hay. Nor is their second LP, *Slugs* (Ruby Red), although it is not quite as overloaded with sheer idea-wattage, taking more the form of debased prog-grope excursions onto the ramp of the ringed percussive o-mind. It's a nice trip, with flutes and toots up the old wazoot. Why they only pressed 100 is anyone's guess.

Best tape label so far this year has been **Fag Tapes** out of Ypsilanti, Michigan. The proprietor dude is Heath Moerland who either works or owns the record store that Mike "Hair Police/Wolf Eyes/The Haunting" Connelly works at. Which means, just by that association alone, this label is el sickosonik. He's released awesome noise death jammers by the nefarious doom-improv unit **Death Kcomm** as well as straight-up bloodfeasts from both **Hair Police** and **Dead Machines**. Sad to say Fag Tapes only issues these animals in editions of 50 or so. But you can, at least by today's date, still grab the best dealio from the label. That be the *Street Freaks 2* and *Super Street 3 "diamonds in th' ruff"* compilations with skrewed out trax by Pengo, Sick Llama, The Haunting, Tape Deck, Wolf Eyes, Sightings, Aaron Dilloway, Connelly and Death Kcomm. Again, these babies are in hand numbered editions of 50 and 75 respectively so you may wanna act FAST. (Update alert: since this writing Fag Tapes has released vols. 3 and 4 of the Super Street series so stop sleepin'). The two distributors who have this shit-fry are Volcanic Tongue in the UK and Fusetron in USA.

Texas called *Illusions of the Maintenance Man* by **Virgin Insanity** (no label). And some people have loved it enough to reissue it in all its whacky glory. There are a few tracks that are way too "real people" hippie lounge ass whatsis to make me shiver, but there are also a few very stoned tracks—the golden hippie loss of "Once," the odd tremor of "Livin' Lives" and others. These make the record's rep somewhat understandable. But the reissue is a far better value than the original. In the same package was *Music from South India* LP (no label), which is a great compilation of contemporary recordings of Indian classical music. This must be the first new LP of this sorta material in many a moon. As such, salute it.

Another nice set of "grey market" (or at least one assumes so) LPs is a new pair by **Magik Markers** and **Sun City Girls**. The Markers' *NxCxHxCx VOL. 1* (no label), which we imagine means North Connecticut HardCore as opposed to anything else, seems like tracks from their CDRs and is a ferocious blap into the mouth of the whale they so ably represent. They are a band that never fails to stun either on stage or on the box, and this album's no exception. It is one heck of a bonus pants-down listening experience. The SCGs' *Montreal Pop* (no label) is a recording from last year in Quebec and is a totally awe-inspiring glimpse at the power these guys have developed. It's a thoroughly majestic prowl through every side of the band—from shockingly sweet ballad remodels, through to the blasted mid-east improv insanity that is their hallmark. What pleasant souvenirs.

Saw a lotta good hoedowns this summer; a lot of the old dudes kicking some of thee most radical ass were Dinosaur Jr, Gang of Four and Yoko Ono. Some great super newies also came in blazing. Particularly the welcome charm and mindblow magic bus of Finnish musicians: Kemialliset Ystävät, Lau Nau, Puukuu, Ijslar and other tripped terrestials. And flat out wonderful were **Eyes and Arms of Smoke** choogling straight outta Lexington, Kentucky where two of the dudes, Trevor Tremaine and Robert Beatty, kick out the jugular with Wolf Eyes. Eyes



RIS PAUL RIC

THE DEBUT ALBUM

Purple Blaze

IN STORES NOW

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Some people have always loved a kinda strange kinda sappy '71 folk album from



Dead Machines

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Speaking of Hair Police, though Connelly is graverobbing across America and Tremaine and Beatty are throwing down the above mentioned kosmiche goodness, you can get a weird and welcome

PAUL RIC

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Purple Blaze

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BONGO BEAT



BEDSIT POETS
the summer that changed

NYC by way of UK duo **Edward Rogers** and **Amanda Thorpe** got their group name from **Colin Blunstone** and it is exactly what you'd expect-a sweet melancholy mix of Luna, Fairport Convention, Gainsbourg & Francoise Hardy (in English) that is literate and low key: a gentle breeze of summer. Here. Now. Forever.

JOE MANNIX

New album from NYC songwriter Joe Mannix. Produced by ex-Dan Lanois associates Glenn Marshall & Dave Rave in an old

inject of HP from their *Beyond Leech Pit* cassette on Fuck It Tapes who we wrote about a couple columns back. Your are archiving these, right?

Never heard of Oakland's **The Time Flys**, but their debut LP, *Fly* (Birdman), is pretty much as its press kit says – classic, just pre-punk style punk. They're right to namecheck people like Unnatural Axe and the Suicide Commandos, but there are hints of even more protean stuff from Luger to Thundertrain to UA-era Flamin' Groovies. We mean, obviously they're coming from a "place" where pop doesn't suck, but the rawness of their approach to "the sissy science" is pretty damn bracing.

New York's **Sean Meehan** is best known for his insane percussion work. Stuff in that area with Tim Barnes and others has always been a mind-warp. He also does cool visual art, and was last noted for the production of a very wily wooden box that could function as an instrument or a "mere" object equally formidably. His newest piece is *Sectors* (for Constant) (SOS Editions) which is a kinda white-on-white assemblage work that masquerades as paper CDs of solo cymbal work, mounted (more or less inside) some artist paper. I've been looking at it quite a bit today and it has a really nice feel to it. 'What the hell else has Sean been up to?" is what we wanna know.

The Tone Filth label out of Minneapolis has released a great huzzing, over-drenched electromeditation tape by **Glass Organ**. It's the aural equivalent of two dudes heads-down buried in the daylight skuzz of bent time. Nice. While you're at it you may wanna pick up two other nasty noise burners from Tone Filth, the always killer and brooding jam stasis of **Sewer Election** (tape is called *TRERIKSROSET* whatever the fuckoo that means) and *Romantic Fever* by **Impregnable**,



which is a great band name no matter what kind of emission you choose to exhort.

Just when you thought it was safe to eat croissants, France's legendary free-rock band **Mahogany Brain** returns in not just name, but also in fucked-up function. Their first LP in 30 years (or so) is called *Some Cocktail Suggestions* (Fractal) and it has much superior weirdness to recommend it. Indeed, it is actually better than their last LP, *Smooth Sick Lights*, which is kinda hard to believe. There's a buncha cracked-open amp-splonge guitar, electronic lip-puckers, backwards masking, treated vocals, Burroughs samples and all kindsa other, very fetching stuff going on here. Whether it's a studio creation or the work of an actual band is immaterial. It's a nice form-stretcher regardless.

Chris Trouchon is not just a distinguished musician in such bands as XBXRX and Hawny Troof. Nor is he just a fabulous dancer and dresser. Not by a long shot. He is also a vegan chef of great repute and his first little cookbooklet has just landed in our midst. *The Hungry Truth: Recipes from the Cooler* (NFJM Press) has a nice silkscreened cover too. Dunno if it's kitchen safe, however, so be sure to buy two. And if you have a striped toque, put it on now.

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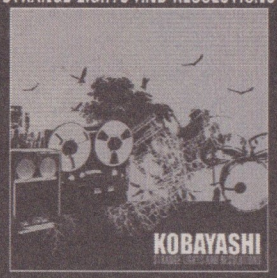
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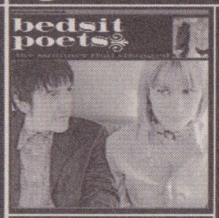
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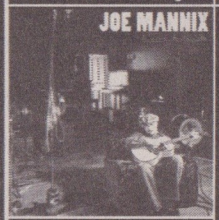
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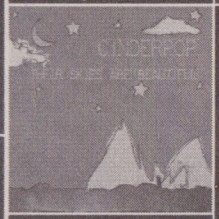
NYC by way of UK duo **Edward Rogers** and **Amanda Thorpe** got their group name from **Colin Blunstone** and it is exactly what you'd expect-a sweet melancholy mix of Luna, Fairport Convention, Gainsbourg & Francoise Hardy (in English) that is literate and low key: a gentle breeze of summer. Here. Now. Forever.



JOE MANNIX
a town by the sea

New album from NYC songwriter Joe Mannix. Produced by ex-Dan Lanois associates Glenn Marshall & Dave Rave in an old church in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada **"like Phil Ochs with The Band"** in another time, another place...

"Can be placed in a fine niche of performers such as Michael Penn & Neil Finn...." All Music Guide



CINDERPOP
their skies are beautiful

Orchestral 60s flavoured pop like **The Zombies** meet **The Left Banke** with **XTC, New Pornographers**, etc; chiming melodic guitars. With **Mark Jowett (ex-Moev)** & **Erin Jane (Salteens)**. Part of a very vibrant Vancouver scene that includes Destroyer & New Pornographers, Cinderpop may very well be the next band to emerge internationally

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been a mind-warp. He also does cool visual art, and was last noted for the production of a very wily wooden box that could function as an instrument or a "mere" object equally formidably. His newest piece is *Sectors* (for Constant) (SOS Editions) which is a kinda white-on-white assemblage work that masquerades as paper CDs of solo cymbal work, mounted (more or less inside) some artist paper. I've been looking at it quite a bit today and it has a really nice feel to it. 'What the hell else has Sean been up to?" is what we wanna know.

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Jeremiah Garcia / Ice Cream Man

The Time Flys

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Highly recommended for persons with eyes is ***Re-Visiting "Father" and the Source Family*** (Swordfish). It's a DVD documentary by a young film-maker about the history and mystery of the Source commune and their formidable leader, Tom "Father Yod" Baker. The story is told by a buncha the original members of the Source, most of whom seem a lot more together than we would've

imagined. The story itself is so nuts (or so ordinary—your choice) that it doesn't really need much embelishment. The talking heads get across the whole tale with a minimum of fluff, even though it takes more than two hours to do it. We wish there woulda been more archival footage available (maybe some'll turn up), but it's still a great watch. The filmmaker's tendency to insert himself into the action is a little annoying at times, but he's just a kid, so cut him slack.

Almost indescribably beautiful is the new LP from **Jack Rose**. *Kensington Blues* (Tequila Sunrise; CD on VHF) is an amazing solo guitar record by any standard you can imagine. Rose's technique has been formidable for a long time (check any prior solo record for beaucoups evidence), but this one really moves into a new realm. The originals have the same blend of blue tones, volk melodicism and two hand strength that have marked all the classic albums by the prior masters. And the cover of Fahey's "Sunflower River Blues" is so deep that it's a goddamn ocean unto itself. But our favorite piece is probably Jack's own "Now That I'm a Man Full Grown II" which is one of the most mean and elegant guitar pieces I've ever heard. Jack Rose, man. Jack Rose...

Wow, the new deluxe and handsome volume by the **Paper Rad Collective and Brad Jones**, *Paper Rad, BJ and da Dogs* (Picture Box Inc.) is a fairly substantial chunk of hardball eye candy. It's very crazy mix of post-ratty-art impulses and extreme sophistication in terms of color and composition, incorporating graphic novels, cartoonland installations, and an extremely crude surrealism. Comparable in ways to both the graphic work of Eye Yamatsuka, and also that of the crew from France's le Dernier Cri, it is really something to see. These guys have sometimes driven us crazy with the overload of their videos, but their print work allows you to approach it at your own pace, and seen like that is pretty mesmeric.

Leslie Keffer is the person responsible for serenading the night skies of Akron, Ohio with beautiful bloodstream noise waves. She can be seen hunkered over her

new LP by L.A.'s **400 Blows**, *Angel Trumpets & Devil Trombones* (Narnack). There's no discernable trumpet or trombone we can make out, but what the hex? The sound is very stubby punk-based avant-thug stuff with some heavy-ass bass riffs that almost sound like feedtime trying to play the Wire songbook or something equally ass-staticy. **D(yad) Yellow Swans** have been noising it up for a while, but these expatriated San Franciscans have not cut much in the way of 12" vinyl. Lotsa other stuff, sure, but the format was often a little, uh, nasty. Here, it's the sounds that unsoothe. Because *Against Sleep and Nightmare* (Weird Forest) is an actual LP, and one that you will enjoy, if you like the sound of monster dogs eating dinner inside a big iron shed. Typically, their recordings are not as drool-invoking as their living power-blat, but the dinginess of their electro-vision here seems more lovely than usual. Could it be the format? We say, yes.

Just in is the fully chipper 2LP version of *Buck Dharma* by **Wooden Wand & the Vanishing Voice** (Time Lag; CD on 5RC). Been hearing the CD a lot on drives, and the bonus tracks here add to the conviction that this is the Wand's most solid smokestack yet.

Our summer reading commitments became quite challenged by general chaos and his infantry of freak scenes but we did get to sneak in ***Easter Everywhere*** (Prism Books) an excellent photo history of Austin, TX's psychobeauty sons the 13th Floor Elevators. Along with the groovy pix it's got some sweet insight writing and interviews with Roky and the boys.

St. Marks Poetry Project in NYC, so long the bastion of street world poetry, has out of nowhere issued a new po zine called ***The Recluse*** available from them. An austere and thoughtful selection of new and been-around names: Renee Gladman, Ted Greenwald, Marcella Durand et al. Hope to see more.

UK scribe Clinton Heylin, who wrote the



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Leslie Keffer is the person responsible for serenading the night skies of Akron, Ohio with beautiful bloodstream noise waves. She can be seen hunkered over her set up of mangled wire-feed and plastic-tronik, hair and eye-gaze falling into the circuitry creating sincerely scary and skin-piercing squall-tone. It would be difficult to recommend any one of her cdrs or cassettes but for our money we'd opt to crank on her recent split tape with Providence, Rhode Island's HEART2Heart called *Lover's Quarrel*. And then move backwards into her juice jams on Ramparts and Gameboy.

A nice guy from a band called **The Assemble Head** gave me a copy of their debut LP, *Sunburst Sound* (Sunburst Sound) and it's a real nice slab of contempo psych. As guitar soaked as you'd imagine, but with sorta Floydian star-clusters in some sections, and others that are more like the vibe Crystalized Movements used to hit in their shorter, rockier songs. Not much info on the guys, but the record is cool. As is the recordings are not as drool-invoking as their living power-blat, but the dinginess of their electro-vision here seems more lovely than usual. Could it be the format? We say, yes.

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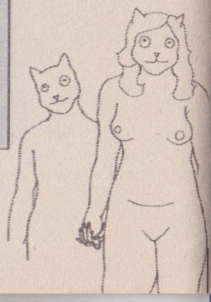
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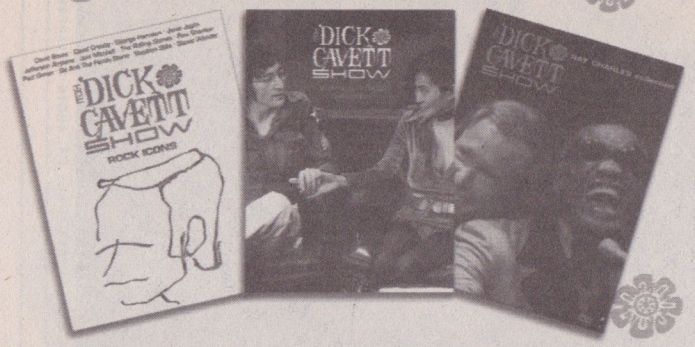


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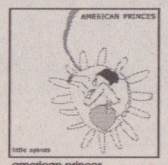
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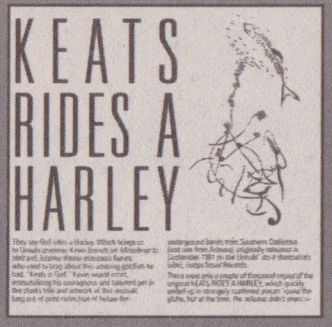
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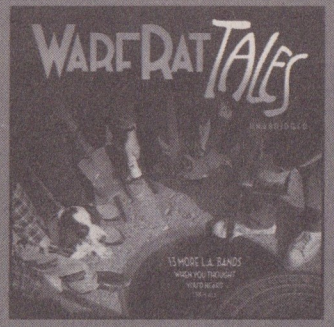
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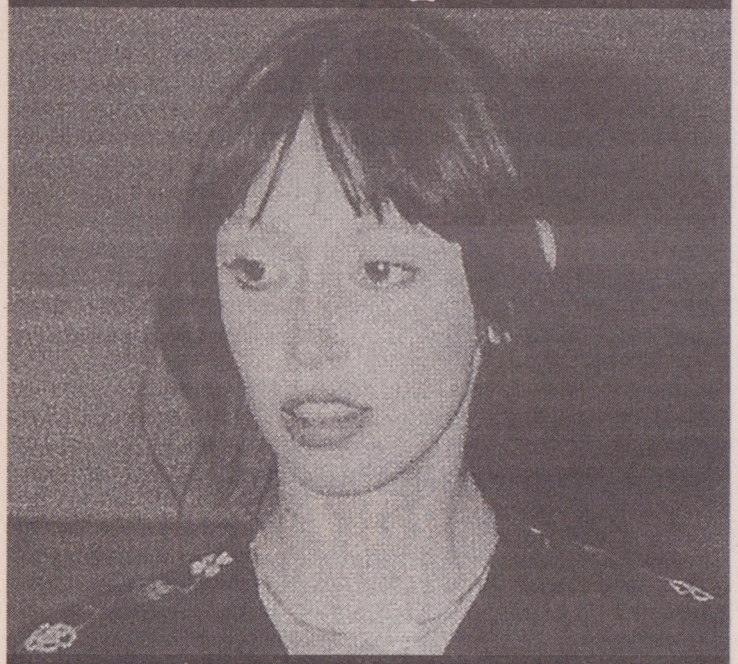
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must read From The Velvets To The Voidoids has edited a compendium of critical writings on The Velvet Underground, ***All Yesterdays' Parties The Velvet Underground in Print 1966-1971*** (Da Capo) This is no academic hooey, mostly brain popping published reviews, interviews and rock n roll essays from such hippie hipster rock mags like *Crawdaddy, Fusion, Planet, Oz*, etc. Awesome Lester Bangs and Patti Smith pieces, along with flyers and ad copy repros, make this a sweet kiss for all Velvet freaks.

If you have kept putting off reading **Ed Sanders'** memoir of Lower East Side 60s radical hippy art, poetry, music, dope, sex, slurp, snort, felch universe then now's the time to dig in, dig? A new and revised edition of *Tales of Beatnik Glory* (Thunder's Mouth Press) has hit the streets and it's a juicy giant of a joint. The current tome is doubly expanded with more memory lights being turned on by Sanders into the inside world of USA Hippie. Sanders was there, he was more than there, he was...there. Like his mentor Allen Ginsberg he was a supreme do-er with a grasp of the goof mind necessary not to have to prove how with it you are. Whoa.

Here's a top 10 from **To Live and Shave In L.A.**'s Tom Smith:

TOP TEN FILMS BY BULGARIAN DIRECTORS
(source: Russian bootleg DVDs, purchased on site or given to TS by E. Solodkaja)

1. *The Peach Thief* (1964, dir. Vado Radev)
2. *Running Dogs* (1988, dir. Ljudmil Todorov)
3. *Partisans (Life Flows Quietly By)* (1958, dir. Binka Zeljazkova and Hristo Ganev)
4. *Birds and Greyhounds* (1969, dir. Georgi Stojanov)
5. *Under the Yoke* (1952, dir. Dako Dakovski)
6. *The Prosecutor* (1968, dir. Ljubomir Sarlandjiev)
7. *There's Nothing Finer Than Bad Weather* (1971, dir. Metodi Andonov)
8. *Time of Violence* (1988, dir. Ljudmil Staikov)
9. *The Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes* (1979, dir. Rangel Valcanov)
10. *Iconostasis* (1969, dir. Hristo Hristov and Todor Dinov)

fence you slouch on, probably all better than *K-PAX*. Over and out, motherfucker.

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juicy giant of a joint. The current tome is doubly expanded with more memory lights being turned on by Sanders into the inside world of USA Hippie. Sanders was there, he was more than there, he was...there. Like his mentor Allen Ginsberg he was a supreme do-er with a grasp of the goof mind necessary not to have to prove how with it you are. Whoa.

Here's a top 10 from **To Live and Shave In L.A.**'s Tom Smith:

TOP TEN FILMS BY BULGARIAN DIRECTORS
(source: Russian bootleg DVDs, purchased on site or given to TS by E. Solodkaja)

1. *The Peach Thief* (1964, dir. Vado Radev)
2. *Running Dogs* (1988, dir. Ljudmil Todorov)
3. *Partisans (Life Flows Quietly By)* (1958, dir. Binka Zeljazkova and Hristo Ganev)
4. *Birds and Greyhounds* (1969, dir. Georgi Stojanov)
5. *Under the Yoke* (1952, dir. Dako Dakovski)
6. *The Prosecutor* (1968, dir. Ljubomir Sarlandjiev)
7. *There's Nothing Finer Than Bad Weather* (1971, dir. Metodi Andonov)
8. *Time of Violence* (1988, dir. Ljudmil Staikov)
9. *The Unknown Soldier's Patent Leather Shoes* (1979, dir. Rangel Valcanov)
10. *Iconostasis* (1969, dir. Hristo Hristov and Todor Dinov)

Superb, the lot, although my Russki yzek's not quite good enough for me to parse pertinent narrative details from Bulgarian. Depending on which side of the

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Velvet Underground

C and D

Two guys bicker about new records.

C: I should advise you that we shall be reviewing many records today with progressive overtones.
D: I came prepared. [smiles mischievously] With beer.

Jana Hunter
Blank Unstaring Heirs of Doom
(Gnomonsong)
D: This is Cat Power covering Patsy Cline. After a plate of lasagna.
C: Are you sure?
D: I cannot be sure, but I feel it to be true. I am trusting my intuition. My blink-of-an-eye insight.
C: Looks like you got something in your eye. This is Jana Hunter, from Houston, Texas.
D: I see. What would you call this?
C: Downbeat lo-fi folk music with a touch of glum? But it's more lonesome than depressing, and she tries a lot of different approaches in arrangement, texture and just general aesthetic.
D: There is definitely a deep longing at work here.
C: The album title hints at a sense of bleak but playful humor—you know the way it mimics doom metal phrasing, half believing it, getting off on how suited to these times this exaggerated language is becoming, what with all the war, pestilence and natural disaster. But sonically this is obviously not High on Fire, so you get a little wink there. Her guitar lines can descend towards doomland like Sabbath.
D: Sometimes I see where she gets the title from...



Vashti Bunyan
Lookaftering
(DiCristina)
D: Spectacularly beautiful.
C: Quiet English folk artist who made a single, slightly psychedelic album in 1970 with various Incredible String Band personnel and so on, and was then lost to the world. Championed by Devendra Banhart, Animal Collective and Four Tet, who've all collaborated with her during the internet era. I think some of them are on this but you just spilled your beer on the notes from the record publicist.
D: Sorry!
C: Anyways, her first album was re-released last year and here's the follow-up. Next album is scheduled for 2037.
D: She sounds the same as last time. There's an almost Burt Bacharach-like feel to this.
C: Yeah the orchestral hook is sweet.
D: They're very shy, mellowcholic songs.
C: There's more piano than one might expect. Very pretty, very modest. Quite a comeback, eh?
D: She saved a little...

M.O.T.O.
Raw Power
(Criminal IQ)
D: [instantly] I like this band. Make it louder!
C: [turning it up] Andrew W.K. meets Guided by Voices: power-pop played with Marshalls.
D: A melodic Fear. Big influence. [increasingly ecstatic] Perfect music for smart hooligans! You can quote me.
C: I am.
D: "Let's Nail it to the Moon" is like Blondie's first record. And "Spend the Night On Me" is full-on Lazy Cowgirls. Aha, you don't like them, but they have mighty hooks! "Teenage Frankenstein" is righteous rock, I'm telling you.
C: Who on earth would call their record *Raw Power*? At first you think they don't know what they're doing, then you think they're just stupidly audacious, then you find out they've been around since

WACO BROTHERS 'Freedom and Weep'



Last call before the fall.
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THE DETROIT COBRAS 'Baby.'

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Enhanced CD release also contains 'Seven Easy Pieces' EP (previously import-only) and video for 'Cha Cha Twist'.

'FOR A DECADE OF SIN: 11 Years of Bloodshot Records'

3 discs, 42 NEW



K-Fai Steele

C: Looks like you got something in your eye. This is Jana Hunter, from Houston, Texas.
D: I see. What would you call this?
C: Downbeat lo-fi folk music with a touch of glum? But it's more lonesome than depressing, and she tries a lot of different approaches in arrangement, texture and just general aesthetic.
D: There is definitely a deep longing at work here.
C: The album title hints at a sense of bleak but playful humor—you know the way it mimics doom metal phrasing, half believing it, getting off on how suited to these times this exaggerated language is becoming, what with all the war, pestilence and natural disaster. But sonically this is obviously not High on Fire, so you get a little wink there. Her guitar lines can descend towards doomland like Sabbath.
D: Sometimes I see where she gets the title from...

Vashti Bunyan
Lookaftering
(DiCristina)
D: Spectacularly beautiful.
C: Quiet English



Vashti Bunyan

There's an almost Burt Bacharach-like feel to this.
C: Yeah the orchestral hook is sweet.
D: They're very shy, mellowcholic songs.
C: There's more piano than one might expect. Very pretty, very modest. Quite a comeback, eh?
D: She saved a little...

M.O.T.O.
Raw Power
(Criminal IQ)
D: [instantly] I like this band. Make it louder!
C: [turning it up] Andrew W.K. meets Guided by Voices: power-pop played with Marshalls.
D: A melodic Fear. Big influence. [increasingly ecstatic] Perfect music for smart hooligans! You can quote me.
C: I am.
D: "Let's Nail it to the Moon" is like Blondie's first record. And "Spend the Night On Me" is full-on Lazy Cowgirls. Aha, you don't like them, but they have mighty hooks! "Teenage Frankenstein" is righteous rock, I'm telling you.
C: Who on earth would call their record *Raw Power*? At first you think they don't know what they're doing, then you think they're just stupidly audacious, then you find out they've been around since like 1988 and so it's just a great reverse inverse record-geek joke.
D: I never heard of M.O.T.O. But they have heard of themselves. They are their biggest fans. They're like, 'This is *our* Raw Power.' And they're right: it's two giant balls on fire!
C: [looking at sleeve photo of mixing board] Notice that everything's recorded at level Infinity. [calculating] The singer must be like 40 years old. Perhaps he is a schoolteacher too...
D: "Flipping You Off With Every Finger That I Have" is song title of the decade.
C: A good ol' American fistfight. Those don't happen too much anymore. What if fighting was in? I don't mean *Fight Club*. But you know, hipsters going to other areas of town to get drunk and fight in

AND WEEP

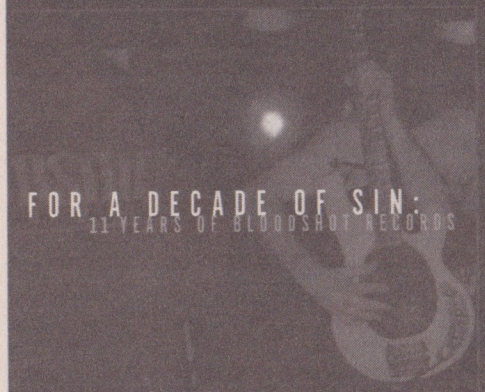
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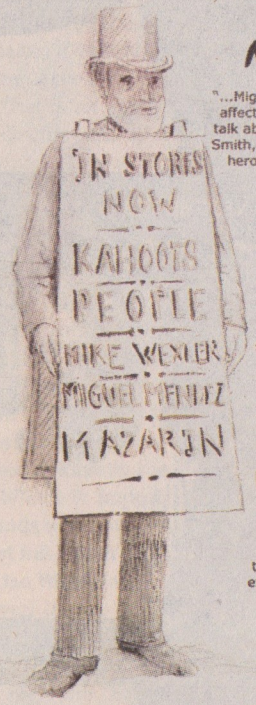
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- Time Out NY



PEOPLE

"The drum/guitar duo mine the bubblegum-pop end of the experimental rock spectrum..."
- Philadelphia City Paper



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BARR

BEYOND REINFORCED JEWEL CASE

NEW RECORD RELEASED ON TUESDAY 10/11/05





... with the most gorgeously sandy-textured voice we've heard in ages"
- Time Out NY

PEOPLE



"The drum/guitar duo mine the bubblegum-pop end of the experimental rock spectrum..."
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"Be Careful What You Call Home"



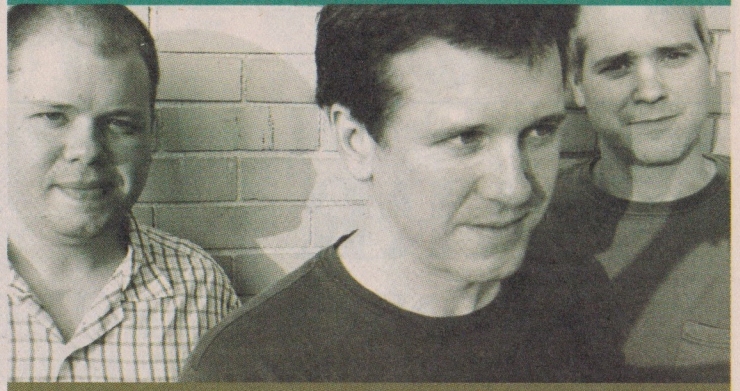
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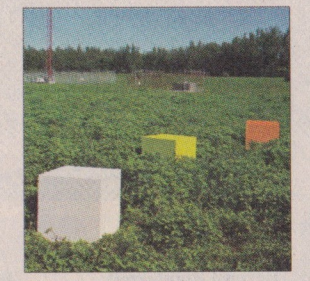
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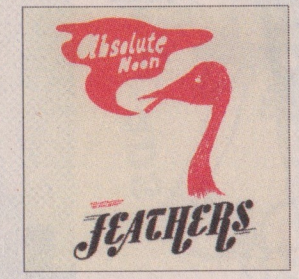
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"Be Careful What You Call Home"



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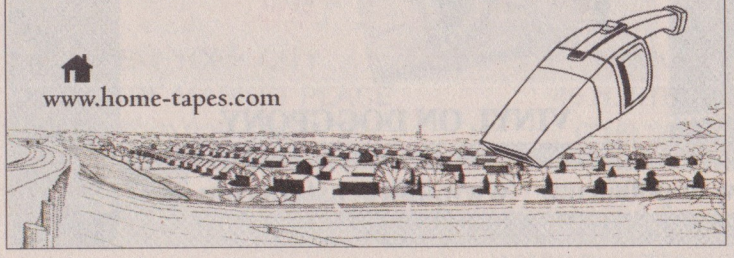


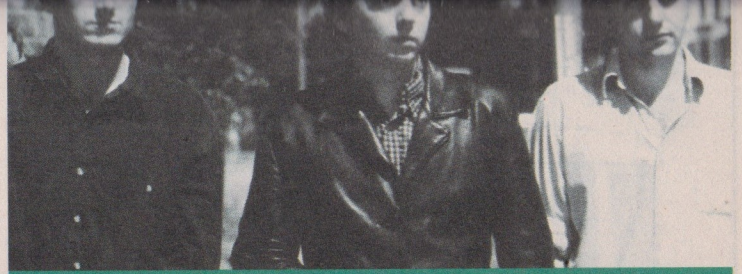
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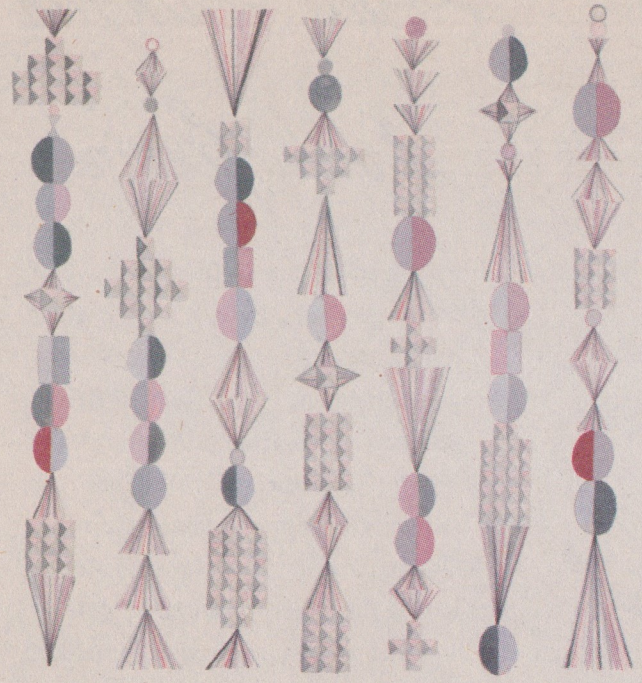


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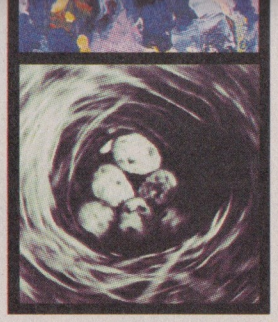




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★★★★
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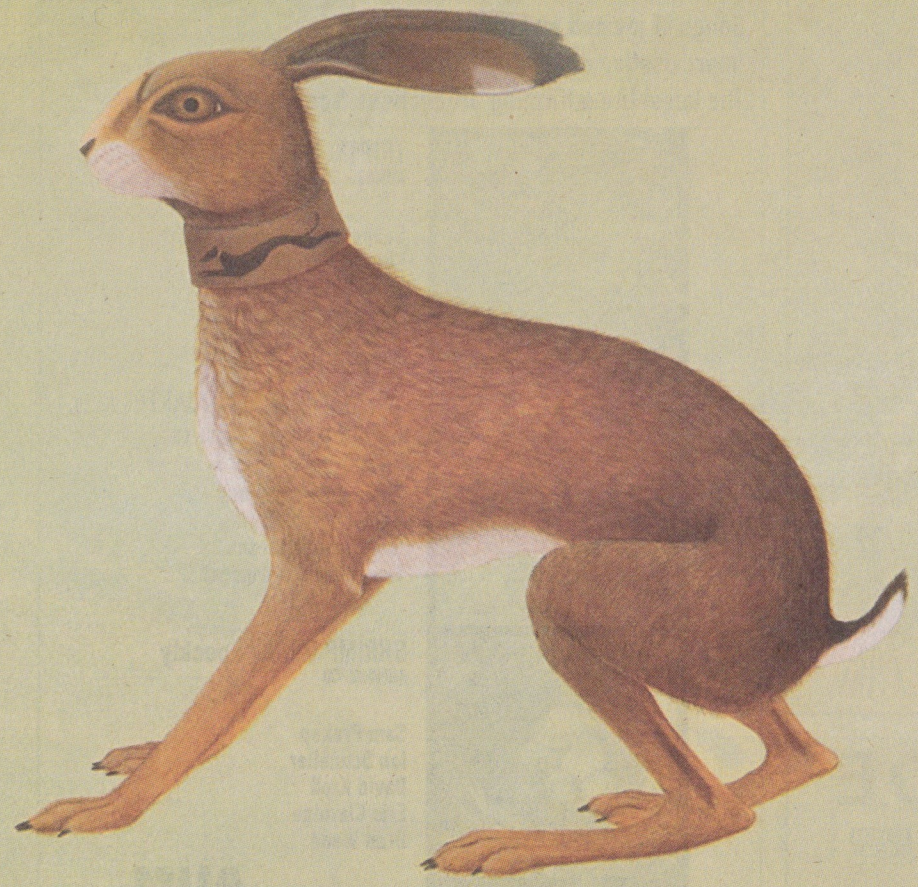


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Vashti Bunyan

Lookaftering

First new album in thirty five years from legendary British singer who's debut, *Just Another Diamond Day*, was named one of the **Top 100 British Albums of All Time** (*Observer Music Monthly*). Features contributions from Adem, Devendra Banhart, Currituck County, Joanna Newsom and Robert Kirby (arranger of three *J.A.D.D.* songs), amongst many others. Produced by Max Richter and co-arranged by Max and Vashti.

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M I & L'A U





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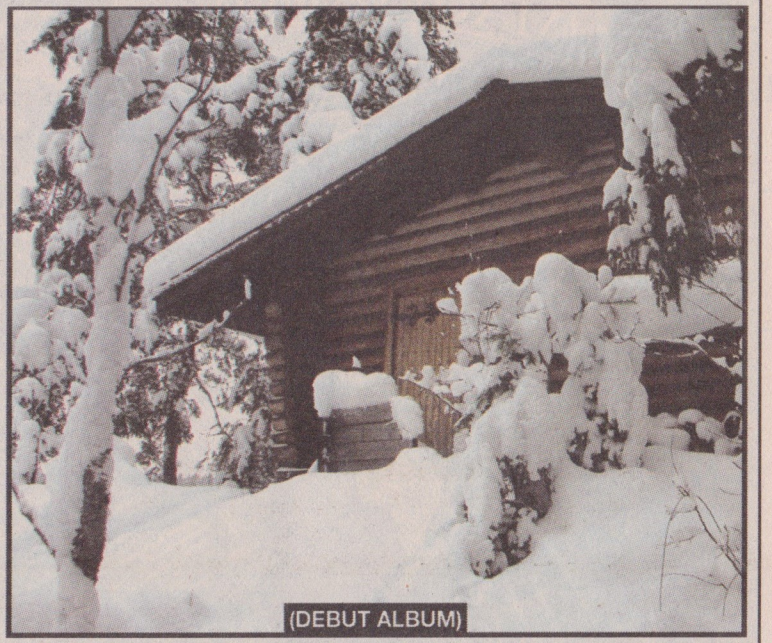


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AKRON/FAMILY: "...Akron/Family has accomplished what most musicians fail to do in an entire career. In a perfect combination of inspired production, innovative instrumentation and transcendent songwriting... as emotional as it is challenging... already transcended category with its eponymous debut full-length." – *Prefix.com*

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MI & L'AU



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"... sweetly earthly and achingly beautiful music... Delicate acoustic organic instrumentation... alive, mortal, compassionate and loving, as they pass out secrets and keys to the bewildered and bewitched. Gently beguiling folk lullabies for the end of the world." – *Dream Magazine*

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public.
D: [repeating lyrics] "The moon in the sky/ Kicks the ass/of the stars/they all fade." This is true. Every song has a certain drunk-at-midnight, howling-at-the-moon-in-the-bar-parking-lot anthemic quality.
C: Their label has the best name in recent memory: Criminal IQ.
D: [confiding] It is said that there is a certain IQ where anyone who has it will eventually commit a crime. It's like 116 or 115 or something.
C: Interesting. [listening to "Girl Inhale"] Anyway, this is an homage to the Beatles tune "Girl" that is so obvious it's great. And is so great because it's so obvious. It's the folk tradition: this is how songs used to change over generations. The keyboard solo is a rip of "In My Life." I wonder if every song is like that and we only are catching the most obvious ones.
D: I am saluting the mighty M.O.T.O. with every finger of my hand.

Cult Cargo: Belize City Boil Up
(Numero Uno Group)
C: Another start-to-finish classic from one of America's very finest record labels, the Numero Uno Group out of Chicago.
D: They are number one!
C: This one is a collection of singles recorded between 1960 and 1980 in Belize. Amazing stuff, lots of covers of American soul hits, some reggae stuff too, all infused with this special feel. There's a warmth—an ease—that's absolutely seductive. You can just get glimpses of their accent.
D: [repeating lyric] "You can't go half way, you got to go all the way/to have all my love." Song of the third date.
C: Numero Uno specialize in upending every notion you have that there is, or has ever been, a meritocracy in pop. They prove that human achievement on this planet is continuous and happens wherever people have time on their hands. It does not take place in the easily circumscribed times and places and sequences that VH1 or self-appointed music experts like ourselves—
D: [Sports, beer comes out of nose]
That's not what I meant.

Choubi Choubi!
Folk & Pop Sounds From Iraq
(Sublime Frequencies)
C: Songs from our musically oriented friends in Iraq, much of it recorded in the Sadaam Hussein era.
D: I like this! You know, maybe we wouldn't bomb them if we listened to their music.
C: Sublime Frequencies, who were spotlighted last issue in *Arthur*, also deserve special recognition and financial reward for service to humanity.
D: [looking at sleeve] It says here that this song, "They Taught Me," is in the style of "1970's Socialist Folk-Rock."
C: Very helpful, D. Now, please pass the shisha.
D: [listening] This one sounds groovy... I am at a loss for words—
C: But not at a loss for beer—
D: [glares] Silence in the lower ranks!
C: It turns out that my favorite is the "Choubi" style, which sounds very Indian movie soundtrack to my untrained ears: odd rhythm, acoustic string instruments, orchestral strings, a woman ululating with a choir.
D: [listening to track 5] Is this one called "bee attack"?
C: No. Although there is an instrument being used called, which is Arabic for "wasp." By the way, it says here on the sleeve that music was regarded as very important by Sadaam Hussein: he apparently called musicians the "seventh division" of his forces. But musicians themselves are not really highly regarded in Iraq. They aren't really stars. Professional musicians are usually outsiders and outcasts, who play weddings and parties and illicit nightclubs, a recording is made to keep the artist going between gigs... gigs as income, recordings as low priority... songs are immediately public domained and any popular, locally pressed recordings are pirated... Is the music better or worse for existing in this way? I dunno. If you were to judge American music solely on the basis of each year's 20 best selling albums, you

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Ernest Eugene Gibson

Cult Cargo: Belize City Boil Up
(Numero Uno Group)

C: Another start-to-finish classic from one of America's very finest record labels, the Numero Uno Group out of Chicago.

D: They are number one!

C: This one is a collection of singles recorded between 1960 and 1980 in Belize. Amazing stuff, lots of covers of American soul hits, some reggae stuff too, all infused with this special feel. There's a warmth—an ease—that's absolutely seductive. You can just get glimpses of their accent.

D: [repeating lyric] "You can't go half way, you got to go all the way/to have all my love." Song of the third date.

C: Numero Uno specialize in upending every notion you have that there is, or has ever been, a meritocracy in pop. They prove that human achievement on this planet is continuous and happens wherever people have time on their hands. It does not take place in the easily circumscribed times and places and sequences that VH1 or self-appointed music experts like ourselves—

D: [Snorts, beer comes out of nose]

C: —like to place it in. The energy is always-there-everywhere, it's just a matter of whether you've found out about it yet. Remember M.O.T.O.? They've been going since 1988, they're in our own country, and we only just found out about them. Think what's been going on in other countries for decades! We don't know anything! Admitting ignorance is the first step towards enlightenment.

D: [definitively] Numero Uno are international cargo crate diggers of the first order. They should be awarded United Nations medals of honors for service to mankind.

C: Okay, time for a snack. [Offering a jar of tiny pickles from Gelson's] Tiny pickle?

D: That's what she said. Wait a second!

D: [listening] This one sounds groovy... I am at a loss for words—

C: But not at a loss for beer—

D: [glares] Silence in the lower ranks!

C: It turns out that my favorite is the "Choubi" style, which sounds very Indian movie soundtrack to my untrained ears: odd rhythm, acoustic string instruments, orchestral strings, a woman ululating with a choir.

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Cult Cargo: Belize City Boil Up

wouldn't say our system is outputting much to speak of. Could it be that music is worse in a corporation-ruled market system than in a dictatorship with zero intellectual property laws? If you were a musician and you're being pirated and you're not getting songwriting royalties and nobody is getting rich off your labor—stall merchants were just getting by, selling tapes, and in the process getting your name out there—would you care about piracy? You might be pissed off a little, but then again, chances are you built on what was there before you too. And anyways, you're doing fine.
D: I would like to drink to this and swivel my hips. Generally just do that thing.
C: I don't think you could get in a bar fight to this.
D: Or a war.

Radio Pyonggyang: Commie Funk and Agit Pop from the Hermit Kingdom
(Sublime Frequencies)
C: Paging Mike Patton, please come to the Lost & Found. We have your Mr. Bungle demo. But seriously: this is a whole record of North Korean stuff: "field recordings, television/radio intercepts and live performances" from 1995-1998. Album two in Sublime Frequencies' Axis of Evil collection. I guess Iran will be next.
D: There is something special here but I think it takes a certain mind to appreciate it. [smiling] Which I have.
C: This is a bit too schmaltzy for me. Where's the funk?
D: [musing] How can we hate them when they're so awesome?

Residual Echoes
Phoenician Flu and Ancient Ocean
(Holy Mountain)
D: [explodes] Whoa! WHOA!!!! What have you let into this place?
C: This band almost caused a riot at Arthurfest when they played the first day downstairs in the theatre. Socks were blown off. Heads were on their cel phones telling people to get over here NOW.
D: Full-on majestic streetwalking cheetah

C: What exactly is going on up there in the banana slug republic to generate this kind of Hawkwind power gazer goner stuff? I can hear some Dead Meadow blisswork bursts in there too—and Crazy Horse search-soling as well. And Acid Mothers Temple yawning-sound journeying, heavy Bonzo drumming. Amazing.

Lightning Bolt
Hyper Magic Mountain
(Load)
C: New riff-blat super-attack from the Providence, Rhode Island artcore guitar-drums power duo.
D: The cover art matches at least the first eight seconds.
C: [reading sleeve] "Humans chill out! There is no back-up planet!"
D: Cathartic art attack. They must be a ball to see live.
C: They have some definite hits here. Reminds me of Unsane, Big Black, Helmet, Killdozer, Slayer: everything on that label Amphetamine Reptile. That sound went pretty mainstream with more ink and noserings and some infant-mind tantrum rapping on top of it. But this is more imaginative and nature-loving, even though it is, as they say, "mastered for metal loudness." Dig the lyrics: "Health is all the wealth I need/birds and squirrels and bees and trees/all the things that ride the breeze/money makes the world go round/drags it down and burns it out/I am the caveman/I am the timebomb..."
D: Time for another beer. I'll be in the fistfight in the other room.

We Are Wolves
Non-Stop Je Te Plie En Deux
(Fat Possum)
D: [Returning with two newly opened beers in hand, enthusiastic] I like this! It sounds like what doing really good coke feels like.
C: Um. I was gonna say these guys sound like it what I had hoped ARE Weapons or that second Faint album would sound like but that's damning with pretty faint praise.

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C: This band almost caused a riot at Arthurfest when they played the first day downstairs in the theatre. Socks were blown off. Heads were on their cel phones telling people to get over here NOW.
D: Full-on majestic streetwalking cheetah thruster guitar rock in Satty-like collage. Man!
C: Year they're like cousins to the Comets on Fire bros, spiritually speaking.
D: Another strike force from Santa Cruz!?!



D: Cathartic art attack. They must be a ball to see live.
C: They have some definite hits here. Reminds me of Unsane, Big Black, Helmet, Killdozer, Slayer: everything on that label Amphetamine Reptile. That sound went pretty mainstream with more ink and noserings and some infant-mind tantrum rapping on top of it. But this is more imaginative and nature-loving, even though it is, as they say, "mastered for metal loudness." Dig the lyrics: "Health is all the wealth I need/birds and squirrels and bees and trees/all the things that ride the breeze/money makes the world go round/drags it down and burns it out/I am the caveman/I am the timebomb..."
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C: Um. I was gonna say these guys sound like it what I had hoped ARE Weapons or that second Faint album would sound like but that's damning with pretty faint praise.
D: It's almost like the Beastie Boys' "Sabotage." Or Devo, even.
C: An agitated, slightly angry Devo. Or Fat Possum's own gonzoid Bob Log III: churning stuff, guitar and vocals set to high-distort.
D: Canadians freaking out with a drum machine.

Boards of Canada
the campfire headphase
(Warp)
C: We are surely not the first people to say this but: bored of Canada. Dull down-tempo, melody-free, quasi-postrock beats for snoreheads. I'm sure they're perfectly serious about what they're doing but it all says soulless doom to me.
D: They need to move to Santa Cruz as soon as possible.

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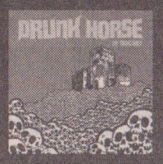
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In Tongues lp

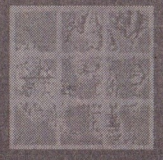
If Billy Gibbons & Phil Lynott had cousins in Oakland they'd probably hang out with Drunk Horse.

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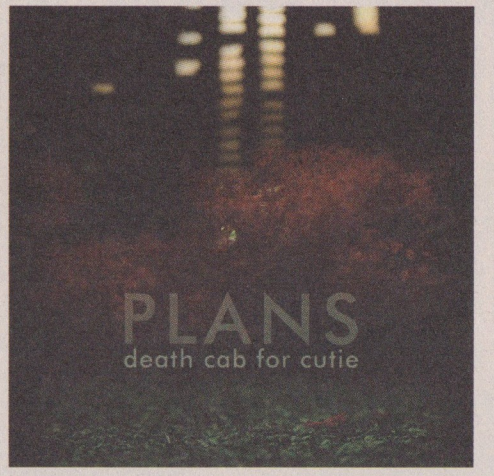
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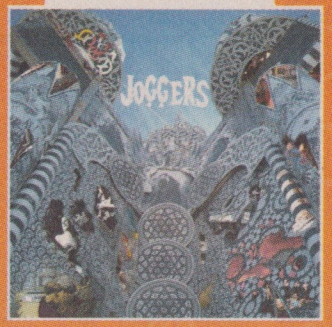
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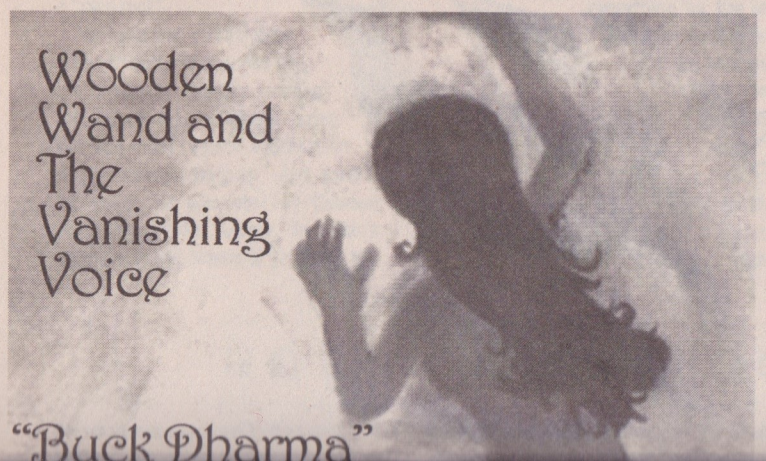
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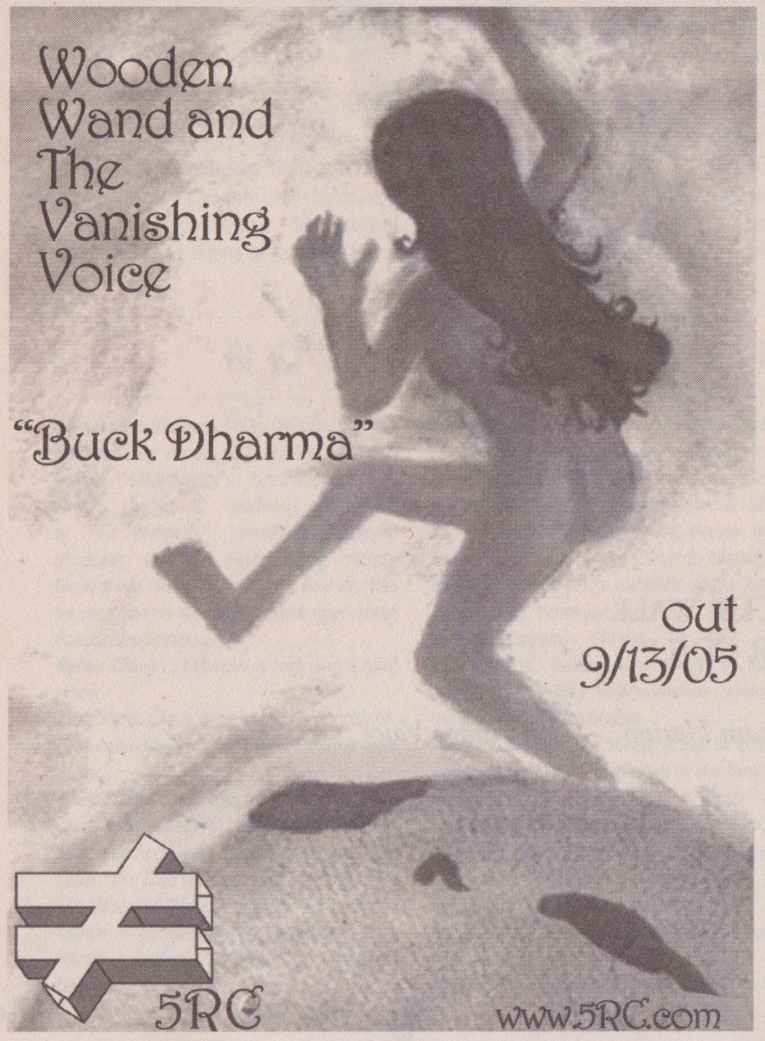


Danger Doom: The Mouse & the Mask
MF Doom & Dangermouse
(Epitaph)
C: MF Doom all over this doing funny, smart stuff. [singing along] "His name is Doom, they wonder just who is he..." And Ghostface is on here still rhyming like he's got a number one album out.
D: The beats are knee-deep Dre-Tang. And the story-sketches are ticklish. [imitating] "East-sigh-hide." Hip-hop album of the year, no question.

Fiery Furnaces
Rehearsing My Choir
(Rough Trade)
C: Fiery Furnaces one-upping *Danger Doom*, doing an album-length story thing. And no, that's not Larry Bud Melman, that's Eleanor and Matt Friedberger's grandmother Olga Sarantas.
D: If that's really her name.
C: It's a family art project.
D: It's also obviously beautiful but I can't tell you too much about it. I can tell you about some other things.
C: We all know that without a steady beat you are lost in the wilderness. So you'll like the disco hit here. When Eleanor sings, "Once upon a time there were two Kevins," Olga harrumphs, "You mean two *jerks*!" Perfect. Everyone loves feisty old women who take a stand. It's a cool record you have to sit and pay attention to, and you actually enjoy doing that for once because the music is unpredictable but never trying, there's interplay between distinctive voices, the lyrics are fantastically evocative and funny, and of course there's Eleanor.
D: Obviously a work of advanced idiosyncratic genii. Their *fourth* in a row. Unbelievable!

Van der Graaf Generator
Pawn Hearts
H to He Who am the Only One
The least we can do is wave to each other
(EMI)
C: Speaking of idiosyncratic genius: here's three reissues of prime Van der Graaf Generator from 1970-1.
D: Yeah, I'm not sure I'm ready for this. Is it prog? Is it punk? Is it jazz? Is it classical? Is it rock? Is it pop? Is it folk? Is it metal? Is it electronic? Is it ambient? Is it noise? Is it industrial? Is it post-rock? Is it post-punk? Is it post-modern? Is it post-structuralist? Is it post-colonialist? Is it post-feminist? Is it post-Marxist? Is it post-Freudian? Is it post-Lacanian? Is it post-Derridean? Is it post-Foucauldian? Is it post-Baudrillardian? Is it post-Jamesonian? Is it post-Zizekian? Is it post-Deleuzian? Is it post-Guattarian? Is it post-Negrian? Is it post-Hardtian? Is it post-Virnoian? Is it post-Lazzaratian? Is it post-Berardian? Is it post-Autonomist? Is it post-Operaist? Is it post-Workerist? Is it post-Leninist? Is it post-Trotskyist? Is it post-Stalinist? Is it post-Maoist? Is it post-Hoxhaist? Is it post-Enverist? Is it post-Gonzalist? Is it post-Kaczynskian? Is it post-Bookchinite? Is it post-Situationist? Is it post-Dadaist? Is it post-Surrealist? Is it post-Futurist? Is it post-Vorticist? Is it post-Cubist? Is it post-Impressionist? Is it post-Romantic? Is it post-Classical? Is it post-Baroque? Is it post-Renaissance? Is it post-Medieval? Is it post-Ancient? Is it post-Prehistoric? Is it post-Human? Is it post-Animal? Is it post-Vegetable? Is it post-Mineral? Is it post-Modern? Is it post-Postmodern? Is it post-Contemporary? Is it post-Future? Is it post-Present? Is it post-Past? Is it post-Time? Is it post-Space? Is it post-Matter? Is it post-Energy? Is it post-Nothing? Is it post-Everything? Is it post-Existence? Is it post-Non-Existence? Is it post-Being? Is it post-Non-Being? Is it post-Becoming? Is it post-Non-Becoming? Is it post-Is? Is it post-Is-Not? Is it post-Was? Is it post-Will-Be? Is it post-Was-Not? Is it post-Will-Not-Be? Is it post-Am? Is it post-Am-Not? Is it post-Are? Is it post-Are-Not? Is it post-Were? Is it post-Were-Not? Is it post-Will-Be? Is it post-Will-Not-Be? Is it post-Have? Is it post-Have-Not? 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D: If that's really her name.
C: It's a family art project.
D: It's also obviously beautiful but I can't tell you too much about it. I can tell you about some other things.
C: We all know that without a steady beat you are lost in the wilderness. So you'll like the disco hit here. When Eleanor sings, "Once upon a time there were two Kevins," Olga harrumphs, "You mean two *jerks*!" Perfect. Everyone loves feisty old women who take a stand. It's a cool record you have to sit and pay attention to, and you actually enjoy doing that for once because the music is unpredictable but never trying, there's interplay between distinctive voices, the lyrics are fantastically evocative and funny, and of course there's Eleanor.
D: Obviously a work of advanced idiosyncratic genii. Their *fourth* in a row. Unbelievable!

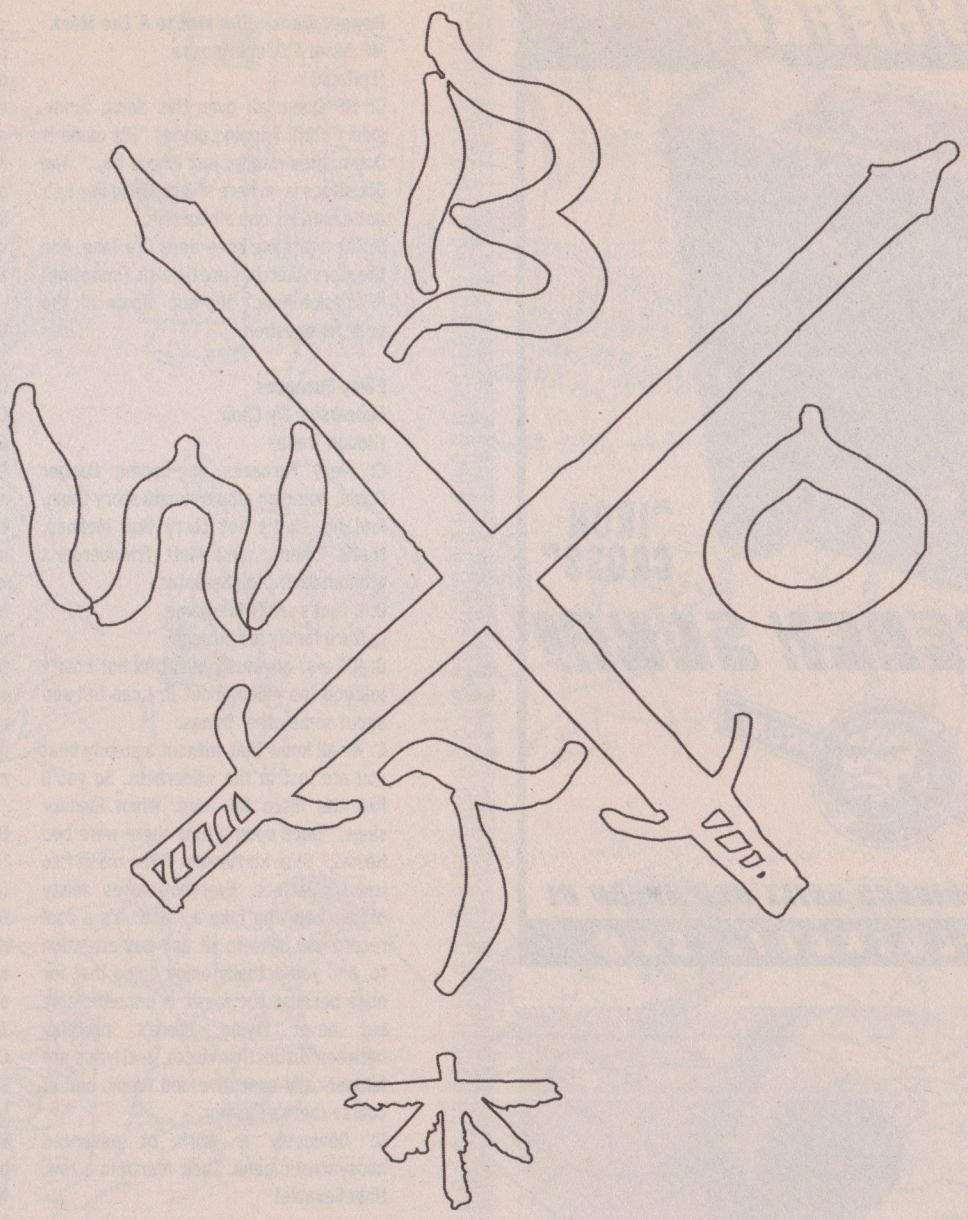
Van der Graaf Generator
Pawn Hearts
H to He Who am the Only One
The least we can do is wave to each other
(EMI)
C: Speaking of idiosyncratic genius: here's three reissues of prime Van der Graaf Generator from 1970-1.
D: You warned me of the coming of the progressive rock, but...! [smiling] I can tell you one thing: we're not in M.O.T.O. anymore, Kansas.
C: Totally visionary, harsh and beautiful stuff that never gets insulting or hairy dippy. They went for it.
D: They were always like the single prog band you were allowed like if you were punk, because Johnny Rotten mentioned them in interviews. Which meant it was approved with a capital A with a circle round it.
C: How varied Johnny's taste was: he was talking Beefheart, VDGG, Can, dub reggae while constructing the snide glam that we call punk rock. It shows. Pete Hammill's voice here goes all the way out to a sneer or cry in the same way that Johnny would

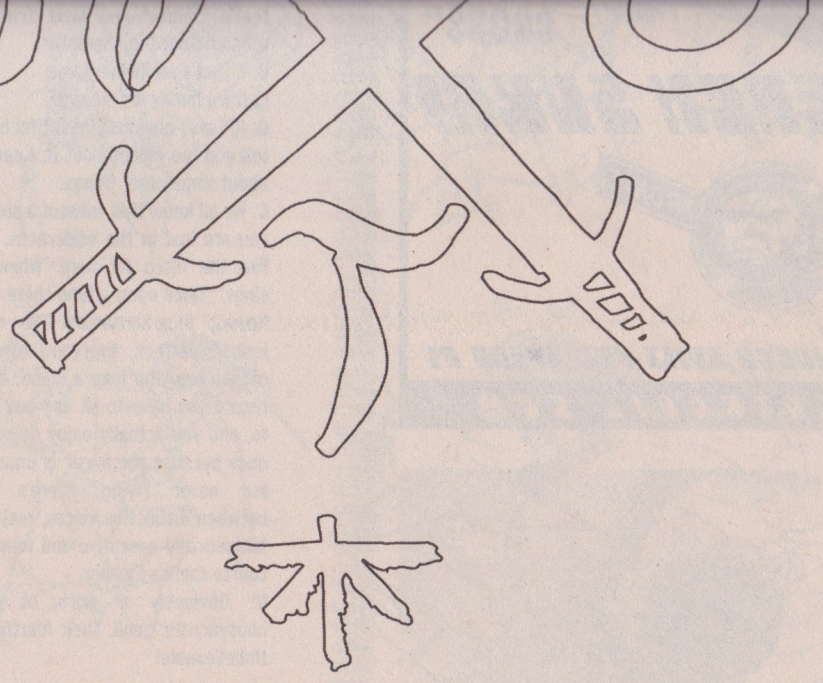
Delia Gozalez

minutemen/fIREHOSE's Hurley & Watt with McGuire on the mircophone spouting the observational storytelling. "Metaphors unfurling... justice contaminated by sentiment!/shutting the drapes/I imbibe on quintessence from the skulls of old masters."
D: It's not SST 1986 but it's close. And that means it's very good.

Delia Gonzalez & Gavin Russom
The Days of Mars
(DFA/astralwerks)
D: [leaning back] And now, we journey deep into the heart of the Moog analog synthesizer and its universe of possibilities. Could this be Cluster? Tangerine Dream?
C: It's actually a male-female duo—two visual artists who make music together too. They are two Americans alive in Berlin. [thinking] You know, I would like to be an American living in Berlin right now... Whoa: we are three minutes into the first track and it keeps getting louder.
D: Yes. It's beautiful and hypnotic and changes slowly but when it does... Wow... [eyes closed, smiling]







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Voodoo-

EROS

DECREPIT

(continued from page 45)

bankruptcy and lost her house. The third sign was when our friend Melissa moved out of her house up the street because she kept hearing machine gun noises on the ground floor. She found out that her house had been a gangster hideout during the bootlegging era—lots of people died in it. My mom was hospitalized for hearing voices. A gardener chopped down our avocado tree.

I wanted to be buried under that tree, with the cremated Old Lady. It's the only place that comes to mind when I think of drafting a will. I'd like to be charred in that very incinerator, but I don't think the guy who lives there now would allow it. I've driven by and seen him on several occasions watering his lawn where our corn used to be.

The Carter Sisters are like ghosts, singing about the space between heaven and hell. *Do not disturb / My waking dream / The splendor of / That winding stream.* That land doesn't seem to include Los Angeles, or anywhere west of the Mississippi. I worry that I come from a place with so few legends, or, to be more accurate, legends that are speculative. Big deal—old ladies, gangsters, tequila, banks taking houses away from people, people getting killed in front of donut shops. There's no real way to know the other people who lived in these rented houses, apart from rummaging through what they left in basements then concocting hare-brained ghost stories about them.

On the nights I lie awake wondering where to be buried, I sometimes recall staring up at The Ranch House's stuccoed ceiling—the plaster sparkled with glitter. I'd wake up in the middle of the night imagining it to be the night sky. A burning candle made it twinkle

R.L. BURNSIDE

(continued from page 70)

the rest.

After a while, a party of young musicians came through the front door. It was the North Mississippi All-Stars, here to pick up R.L.'s son Dewayne in their van. Dewayne was set to back them on drums tonight at a show in Oxford. The bandleader, Luther Dickinson, ended up into the back room where we sat talking. He's a young dude, with long hair and a fast smile, and, when he saw R.L., his smile got bigger and he went over to say hello.

Luther seemed to sense R.L.'s fatigue, and he knelt down so he could listen better to what he was saying. All I could hear of their conversation was a lot of 'Yes sir's" on the part of Luther and a lot of chuckling from R.L. I am no stranger to Southern ways, and I could understand that Luther was a well-brought up young man, but this was something much more than mere respect for your elders.

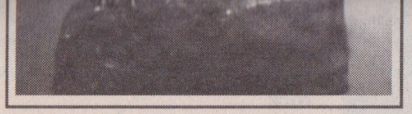
It was a beautiful scene, the young acolyte at the feet of the sage, paying tribute and also gleaning the kind of sustenance that can't be found in guitar instruction manuals. I will always remember the glow that came over R.L's haggard face as he bantered with another of his sons, this one adopted, who will carry on his ways, to not merely endure, but to prevail.

DOUGLAS RUSHKOFF

(continued from page 9)

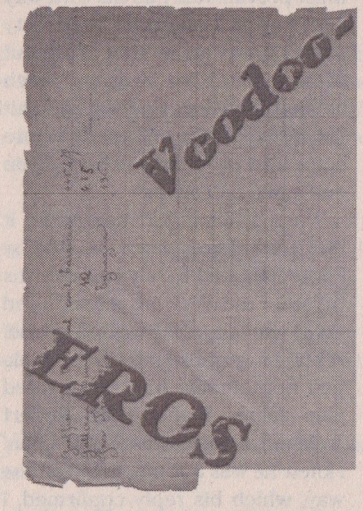
for his journeys out of body and mind, this book is remarkable for its lucid and level-headed treatment of a great many cultural movements. Ken was one of my best teachers, and I invite you to get in on his intelligence.

The other effort I've been following


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the guy who lives there now would allow it. I've driven by and seen him on several occasions watering his lawn where our corn used to be.

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On the nights I lie awake wondering where to be buried, I sometimes recall staring up at The Ranch House's stuccoed ceiling—the plaster sparkled with glitter. I'd wake up in the middle of the night imagining it to be the night sky. A burning candle made it twinkle even more. It was disco and country at the same time—glam-rural—a combo that makes me realize the irony of a band called Pavement singing about Range Life. I know I'll be an old lady ghost because I lie in bed feeling young and old at the same time. Young in experience, but old because I wish to be part of some tradition. I crave a past but don't want to live in it. Eras run into one ageless mess. Ghosts live in different times simultaneously. They yearn for what's lost. I haven't even lost anything but I still find myself yearning for it. Not knowing where you come from is dumber than never wanting to leave.

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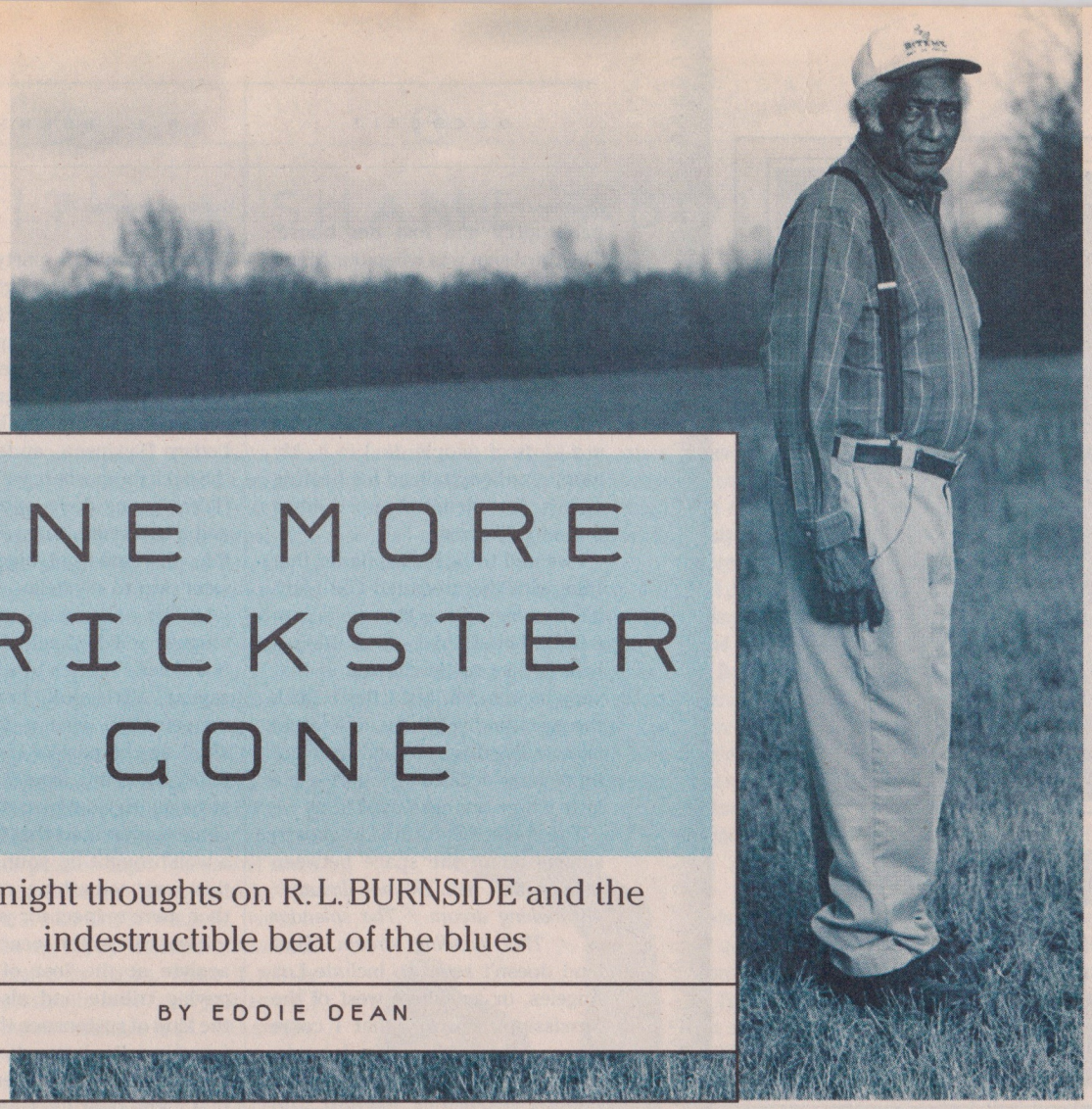
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(continued from page 9)

for his journeys out of body and mind, this book is remarkable for its lucid and level-headed treatment of a great many cultural movements. Ken was one of my best teachers, and I invite you to get in on his intelligence.

The other effort I've been following is the on and offline work of Dan Sieradski, whose website Jewschool keeps what I think of as the genuine Jewish tradition of iconoclasm alive. His latest web offering, orthodoxanarchist.com chronicles his ongoing adventures in Israel trying to keep his people real. There are some harrowing stories of Jewish settlement insanity, racism and other misguided bigotry, right alongside genuinely inspiring creative solutions to some millennia-old problems. Dan is also helping to develop something called Yakar, a "learning community" (we're talking education, here) dedicated to using Torah as it was intended: for spiritual and terrestrial revolution. L'chaim, and party on.



ONE MORE TRICKSTER GONE

Late-night thoughts on R. L. BURNSIDE and the indestructible beat of the blues

BY EDDIE DEAN

You have to meet your heroes whenever you can, so I accosted Shelby Foote as he was leaving the men's room at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC.

The 72-year-old author of the *Civil War: A Narrative*, rightfully called our American *Iliad*, was minutes from delivering a lecture to a packed house, and he was in hurry to get to the podium. I wanted to give him a story I'd written about an obscure country-music rebel named Jimmy Arnold.

Hailing from southwest Virginia, Arnold had transformed himself from a shy, skinny mountain kid

came his reply, in the same fountain-pen scrawl that he'd written 500 words a day for more than 20 years to finish his masterpiece. He thanked me for the story and the cassette of *Southern Soul* I'd included, "both of which made me deeply regret not having seen him [perform] live while he was still with us. Pretty soon, I fear, we're going to run out of people like him & we'll be much poorer for the loss."

His words came to my mind when I heard that R.L Burnside had died in September.

must prevail. R.L. had his own way of saying it: "Hanging in like a dirty shirt." It was an art that arose out of sheer stubbornness as much as anything else. He took the shit life threw at him and made it into some sort of Phyriic victory, again and again and again.

When I heard R.L was gone, it hit extra hard, because Shelby Foote had died barely two months before. I recalled our second (and final) exchange. I'd written a brief reply of gratitude to his thank-you note, telling him that I rated Skip James higher than Robert

producer Robert Palmer "rediscovered" R.L. in the early '90s and his liner notes to the Fat Possum classic, *Too Bad Jim*, bears repeating for its insight into R.L's love of chaos as a philosophy of life:

"One of the most productive album sessions began on a rainy Sunday afternoon with a rapid-fire sequence of disasters. A bass literally fell apart, a drum kit broke into pieces and finally a heavy glass door fell out of its frame for no good reason and was prevented from smashing the recording board only through the timely intervention of the producer's skull. Far from being deterred, R.L. was positively beaming. He seemed to enjoy these incidents immensely, and by the time we'd cleared away all the damage he was in an inspired mood, ready to rock."

As good as *Too Bad Jim* is, *A Ass Poacket of Whiskey* is better. Recorded two years later with the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, it is, among other things, the hardest-rocking album ever made by a 70-year-old. It has been described as a party record, which it is, in the same way that the Stooges' *Funhouse* is a party record. Even here, instead of grandstanding and showboating like every other elderly bluesman has done at one time or another (and you can't blame a single one), R.L. will have none of it. He is a conduit, a cosmic joker talking trash and invoking the chaos of the universe. The band doesn't let him down.

A few years after *Ass Pocket* made R.L. a sensation on the underground rock circuit, I went to see him at his home in the hill country near Holly Springs, MS. It was early January, in between tours, and he was nursing a cold. Even so, he was cordial and full of

GONE

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Hailing from southwest Virginia, Arnold had transformed himself from a shy skinny mountain kid into a bluegrass-biker outlaw of Orson Wellesian proportions. He tattooed himself from head to foot like a Celt warrior of old (including a panther on his face and a risen Christ on his throat) and recorded a sui generis concept album about the Lost Cause, *Southern Soul*, before dying at age 41 of heart failure. I figured Foote would be interested to know that Civil War buffs came in all shapes and sizes.

I didn't want to battle the post-lecture autograph crowd, so I figured now was the time for the hand-off. He took the package graciously, and I never expected to hear from him again.

Several months later, though, came his reply, in the same fountain-pen scrawl that he'd written 500 words a day for more than 20 years to finish his masterpiece. He thanked me for the story and the cassette of *Southern Soul* I'd included, "both of which made me deeply regret not having seen him [perform] live while he was still with us. Pretty soon, I fear, we're going to run out of people like him & we'll be much poorer for the loss."

His words came to my mind when I heard that R.L Burnside had died in September.

R.L. was another hero of mine, and we're running out of people like him. He was a trickster figure right out of Southern folklore, full of mischief and uncommon mettle. His signature "Well, well, well" is at once bemused and menacing, an open declaration of war against easy sentimentality and crap romanticism. It is not the jaded voice of "I've Seen It All," it's "I've Seen a Lot, and I Want to See More."

R.L was a realist, and as such took it as his beholden duty to tell the truth as he saw it. The witness to disaster—his own and those around him—must do something more than simply mourn. He's got to testify. And he must not only endure, as Faulkner put it, he must prevail. R.L. had his own way of saying it: "Hanging in like a dirty shirt." It was an art that arose out of sheer stubbornness as much as anything else. He took the shit life threw at him and made it into some sort of Phyriic victory, again and again and again.

When I heard R.L was gone, it hit extra hard, because Shelby Foote had died barely two months before. I recalled our second (and final) exchange. I'd written a brief reply of gratitude to his thank-you note, telling him that I rated Skip James higher than Robert Johnson as the ultimate bluesman. I knew he was a Johnson fan all the way, which his reply confirmed. I also threw in a mention that John Keats was my favorite poet, and he agreed, adding, "Keats is my man too, I only wish he'd lived to be 80 like Robert Browning."

Thinking of these two old lions now gone, these two neighbors (they lived just 40 miles apart, Shelby in south Memphis, and R.L in north Mississippi hill country,) of a South long dead and gone, it hit me that R.L. was the Browning of the blues, a late bloomer who gained more power and force with time, that rare musician who burns brighter as the years go on.

The late writer and record seemed to enjoy these incidents immensely, and by the time we'd cleared away all the damage he was in an inspired mood, ready to rock."

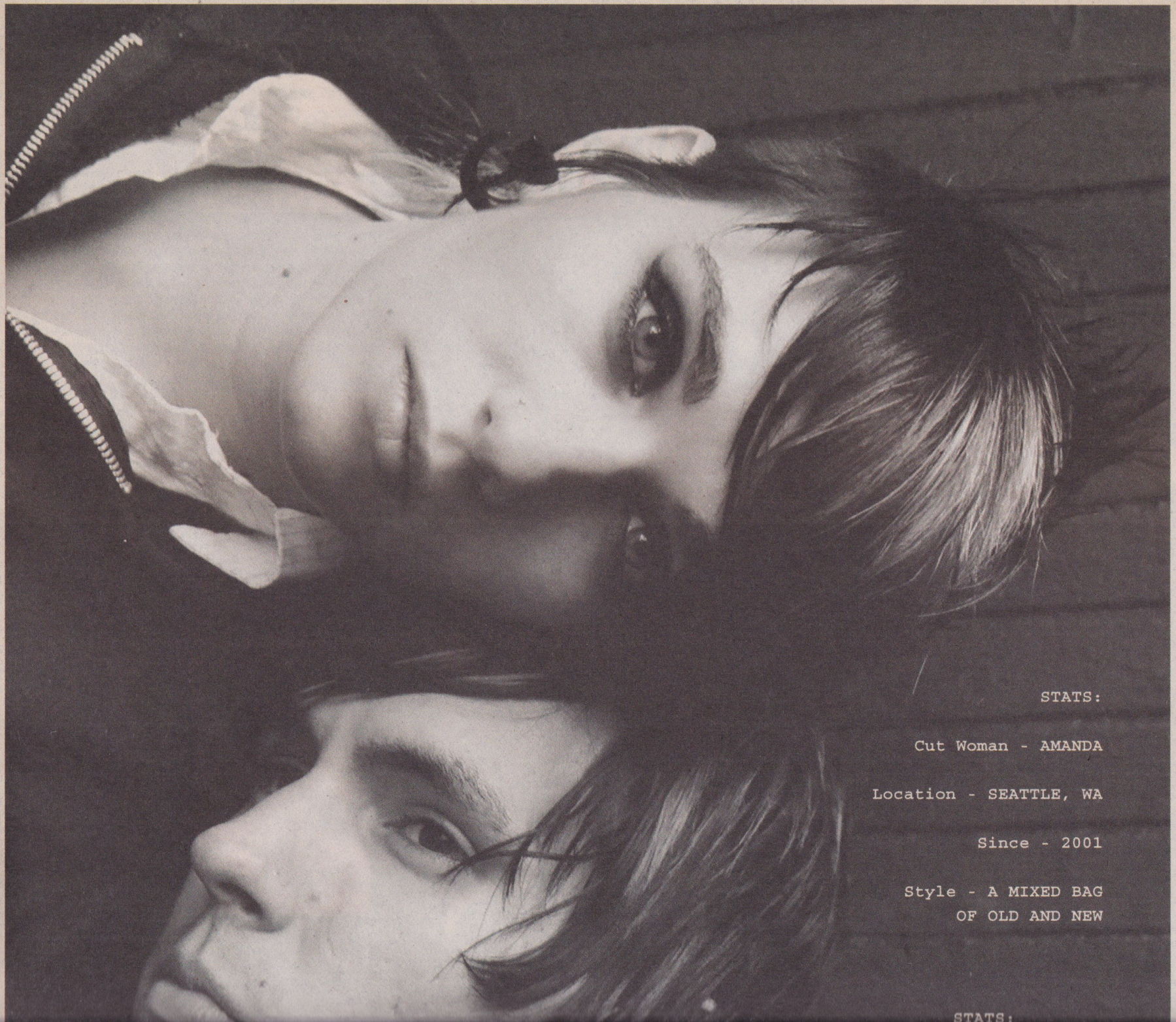
As good as *Too Bad Jim* is, *A Ass Poacket of Whiskey* is better. Recorded two years later with the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, it is, among other things, the hardest-rocking album ever made by a 70-year-old. It has been described as a party record, which it is, in the same way that the Stooges' *Funhouse* is a party record. Even here, instead of grandstanding and showboating like every other elderly bluesman has done at one time or another (and you can't blame a single one), R.L. will have none of it. He is a conduit, a cosmic joker talking trash and invoking the chaos of the universe. The band doesn't let him down.

A few years after *Ass Pocket* made R.L. a sensation on the underground rock circuit, I went to see him at his home in the hill country near Holly Springs, MS. It was early January, in between tours, and he was nursing a cold. Even so, he was cordial and full of good cheer, as he must have been with a hundred other journalists who tracked him down in his final glory years.

Inside his small brick house, a dozen or so family members and hangers-on were crowded around the TV set, watching *Tombstone* with Kurt Russell on cable. Nobody paid any attention to either myself or R.L. as he ambled back to the kitchen to make me a drink. They had seen this interview scenario many times before, and only movies like *Tombstone* held up to repeated showings.

R.L, sank into a couch near the kitchen sink, and I took a seat opposite. He was tired, he needed

(continued on page 69)



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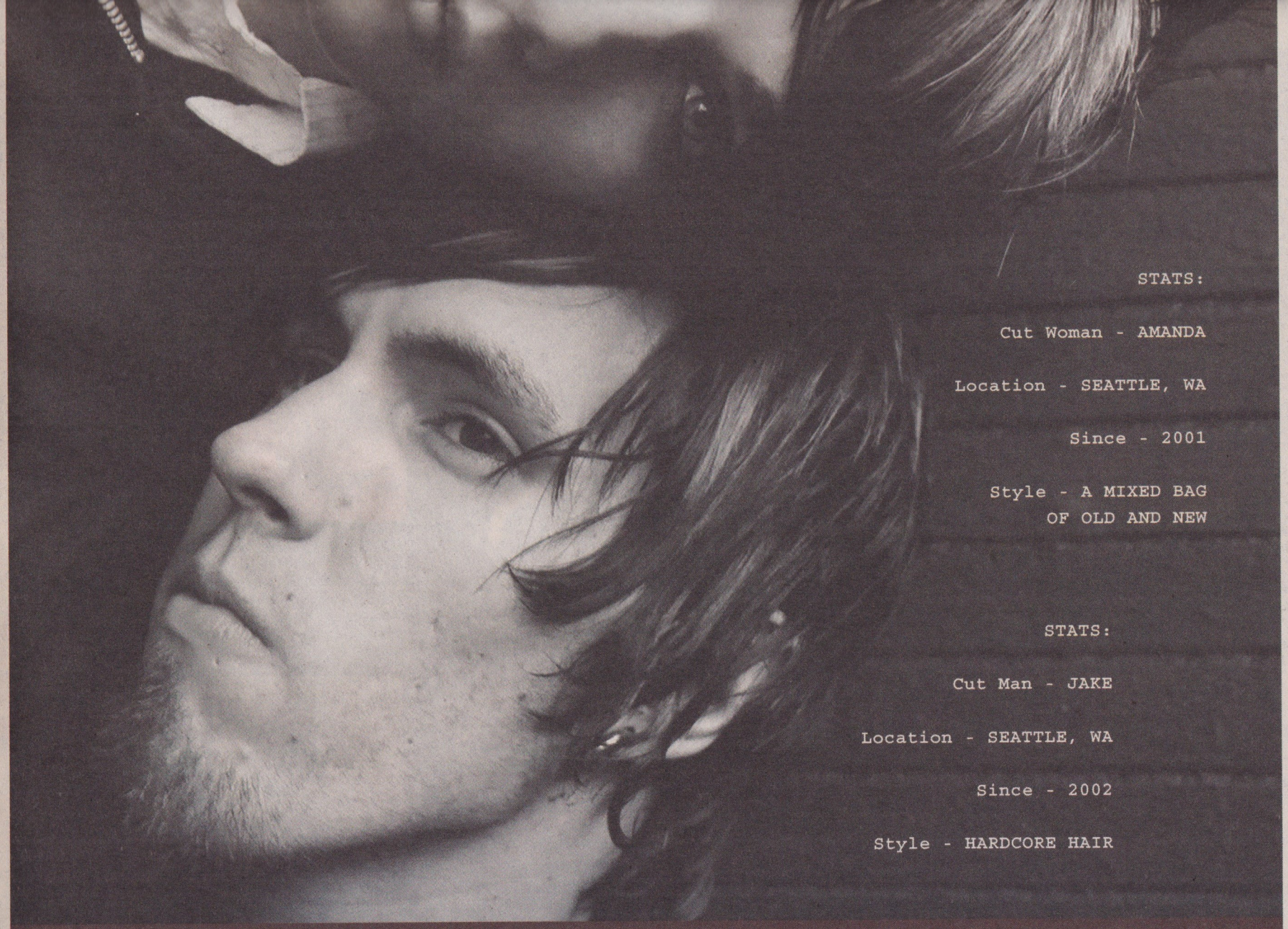
Cut Woman - AMANDA

Location - SEATTLE, WA

Since - 2001

Style - A MIXED BAG
OF OLD AND NEW

STATS:



STATS:

Cut Woman - AMANDA

Location - SEATTLE, WA

Since - 2001

Style - A MIXED BAG
OF OLD AND NEW

STATS:

Cut Man - JAKE

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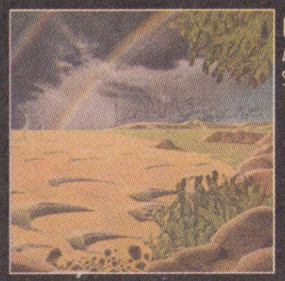
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Fieldwork
Simulated Progress
PIE 16

"...Personnel changes have not diminished **Fieldwork's** power and coherence...**Fieldwork's** rhythmic logic can be immensely involved, but the results are disarmingly concise. The music is also rich in paradox: dark yet uplifting, intellectually demanding yet effortlessly funky." – *JazzTimes*

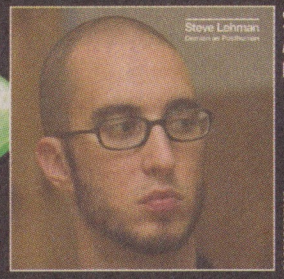
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Landing
Brocade
SAA 37

Brocade is a turning point for **Landing**, one that harkens back to their roots as hushed drone rockers while journeying onwards into starkly minimalist, utterly cosmic terrain. Reverting inward after some of their sunny travels into headspace, *Brocade* touches on early Krautrock rhythms while delving into traditional psychedelic ambient music. An elegiac lament for **Landing's** past, and an introspective yearning towards a glistening new phase in their career.

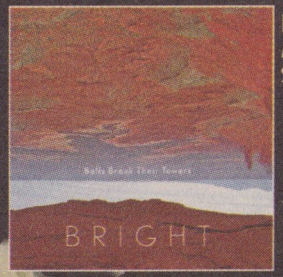
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Steve Lehman
Demian As A Posthuman
PIE 17

In early 2005, Lehman assembled a quintet including **Vijay Iyer, Meshell Ndegeocello, Jahi Lake** and **Eric McPherson** to record modern-sounding electric music informed by the possibilites of the '70's and recent attempts to wed jazz with electronica. The result is *Demian as Posthuman*, a constantly morphing sound statement from one of today's most compelling composers.
"The man to watch on the ever-evolving New York scene." – The Wire

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Bright
Bells Break Their Towers
SAA 38

Fans of minimalist, melodic ambient rock rejoice, for leading lights **Bright** are back with *Bells Break Their Towers*, their most sonically taut and elaborately adorned recording yet. Drone and ambient textures, motorik Kraut rhythms and repetitious grooves collide with a tremendously melodic, almost pop sensibility, lending **Bright** a unique sound. This is improvised rock you can hum to while you drift into trance states.

www.northeastindie.com



Cerberus Shoal
The Land We All Believe In
EIR 38

"Ten years after emerging from the hidden nooks and crevices of New England, these art-rock radicals continue to eschew the cultural norm in favor of their own liberated muse. Like **Captain Beefheart** and **Mr. Zappa** before them, this shape-shifting ensemble osterizes rock, avant-garde and free-jazz idioms,

www.strange-attractors.com



Nels Cline/Wally Shoup/Chris Corsano
Immolation/Immersion
SAA 39

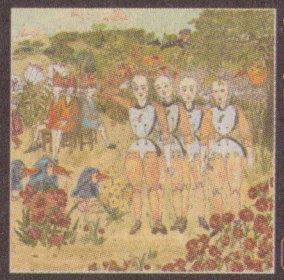
Immolation/Immersion is the inaugural recording of what will hopefully be more blasts of fury and filigree by three leading lights of improvised music – guitarist **Nels Cline**, saxophonist **Wally Shoup**, and young percussionist **Chris Corsano**. As hinted by the title, *Immolation/Immersion* is



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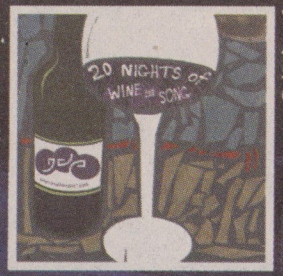


Cerberus Shoal

The Land We All Believe In

EIR 38

"Ten years after emerging from the hidden nooks and crevices of New England, these art-rock radicals continue to eschew the cultural norm in favor of their own liberated muse. Like **Captain Beefheart** and **Mr. Zappa** before them, this shape-shifting ensemble osterizes rock, avant-garde and free-jazz idioms, oscillating at will between freestyle sound collages and off-tuned freakpop escapades." – *The Isthmus*

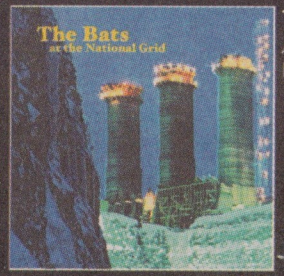


Various Artists

20 Nights of Wine and Song

GDP 20

20 Nights of Wine and Song is a veritable roll call of **Greyday** artists past, present and future, presenting songs never before available outside of live shows. It is a mission statement of sorts – a plate full of the art made by our friends that is best served with a quality red wine, preferably a cabernet (but please listen responsibly).

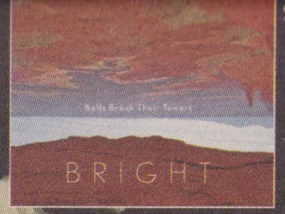


The Bats

At The National Grid

MMK 34

First new album from **The Bats** in 10 years shows that they're still as amazing as ever! "...That **The Bats** can churn out such an alternately haunting and heartfelt collection in their 23rd year is a testament to their indefatigable skills." – *Magnet*



SAA 38

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Nels Cline/Wally Shoup/Chris Corsano

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